

Privaterra - Report from the field

(Security, ICTs & Human Rights)

Robert Guerra
Managing Director, Privaterra

22nd Chaos Communications Congress
Private Investigations
Berlin, December 28, 2005

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(History)

- Individuals in Canada, USA, Spain and Peru were interested in further developing the work of AAAS and others to provide IT security assistance to Human Rights NGOs
- Idea was to develop a concrete project, a concrete activity that would bring
 - Security & technology to human rights ngos
 - Comments from the field to developers, security experts & policy debate
- Consultation with activists, hackers, human rights organizations, etc
- In Oct 2001 Privaterra was created as an independent ongoing project of Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR).

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(Mission)

- Training - Security
 - Basic Concepts - understanding vulnerabilities
 - Secure communications
 - Collaboration

- Create linkages and opportunities between developers, IT practitioners, academics, and human rights organizations.
 - Share information (respecting privacy)
 - Collaborate with other organizations

- Advocacy
 - Bring information from “field” to policy discussions (Canada - lawful access, CoE Cybercrime, WSIS, etc)

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(Projects)

- **Communications security training workshops**
 - Africa (South Africa & Democratic republic of Congo)
 - Central Asia
 - Europe
 - Latin America (Central & South America)
 - Middle east
 - South East Asia

- **Outreach**
 - Media - TV, Radio & new media

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(Methodology)

- **Assessment & Interview**

- **Use appropriate language**
 - Recognize primary focus for many is not technology, nor security but “just getting their work done”
 - Make sure concepts & tools are understood in their context.
 - Cultural & gender sensitivities need to be taken into consideration.

- **Basic knowledge**
 - Key concepts need to be explained as there are often misconceptions of how things work
 - Use analogies and examples that will be understood in their context.

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(Methodology)

- **Security training workshops**
 - Individualized - One to One
 - Small Groups - 5-10 Individuals
 - Groups - No more than 30

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(What's the "field" like ?)

- **Traveling**
 - Can be quite complex at times.

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(What's the "field" like ?)

- **Traveling**
 - Can be quite complex at times.
 - Conditions can change at any time - Be prepared
 - Work with locals so that misconceptions do not occur.

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(Workshops - A Tour)

- Central Asia
 - Kazakhstan

- Russia
 - Moscow

- Latin America
 - Colombia
 - Peru
 - Guatemala

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(What's there ?)

- **IT Infrastructure**
 - Spend time to assess the infrastructure that's in place
 - It might not always be ideal, but it works ...

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(What can be done?)

- Backup Solution - What was done
 - Collaboration with AVACSO (Guatemala) & AAAS
 - Bring backup solution to leading NGO
 - To backup data a network needed to be built
 - Work with staff
 - Train them so that they can learn to do it themselves
 - Advice them on choices ...
 - Watch them build the network...

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(Remember the context..)

- Remember the context...
 - Remember that the core mission for the organization isn't a technological one.
 - Human rights organizations collect, analyze and process all sorts of data.
 - Protecting the "data" means more than just saving bits...

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(Secret Archives - What a discovery...!)

■ The context

- July 5, officials from the Guatemalan government's human rights office (PDH - Procuraduría de Derechos Humanos) entered a deteriorating, rat-infested munitions depot in downtown Guatemala City to investigate complaints about improperly-stored explosives.
- During inspection of the site, investigators found a vast collection of documents, stored in five buildings and in an advanced state of decay.
- The files dating from 1904 to the present belong to the National Police, the central branch of Guatemala's security forces.
- The importance of the discovery cannot be overstated. Since 1996, when the government signed a peace accord with guerrilla forces, Guatemalans have fought to recover historical memory, end impunity and institute the rule of law after more than 30 years of violent civil conflict.

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(Lessons learned)

- Keep the explanations simple
 - The “core” message, is what is important and not the technical explications we too often use.
 - Use illustrative and local examples to make sure things are remembered.
- Secure communications
 - The “standard” tools (gnupg, etc) are often shown however ongoing sustained use is rare.
 - *The userbase for strong cryptography declines by half with every additional keystroke or mouseclick required to make it work. (Carl Ellison)*
 - Shift to tools and approaches that opportunistically encrypt data for the user.

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(Lessons learned)

- Support infrastructure - What's available ?
 - Recommendations should be based on what's locally available and support that can (or not) be found.
 - Dependency on foreigners is a bad thing.
 - If no support can be found, then one needs to spend the time to build-up relationship with local experts so that they can support organizations.
- Tools - Usability issues remain
 - Not only do we need "good crypto", but usable crypto as well.
 - Crypto needs to be included and turned on by default, and not an option that the user installs.

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(Solidarity)

- Solidarity
 - Different communities share many of our core beliefs.
 - Let's not give up and say the war is lost, but instead regroup and join forces with other like-minded organizations to continue the battle.
 - A poem:

*It is not only the desire of justice,
the hope of peace,
the love of a woman
or the tenderness of a Guitar
it is also the heat of the solidarity that brings us together today*

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(References)

1. [Amnesty International on Guatemala](#)
2. [Human Rights Watch on Guatemala](#)
3. [The Tactical Technology Collective](#)
4. [International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#)
5. [National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 170 \(Nov 21,2005\)](#)
6. [BBC News - Guatemala secret files uncovered - Monday, 5 December 2005](#)
7. [National Security Archive - Guatemala Documentation Project](#)

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(Contact info)

Robert Guerra

Managing Director, Privaterra

Phone: +1 (416) 893-0377

Fax: +1 (416) 893-0374

Web: <http://www.privaterra.org>

E-mail: rguerra@privaterra.org