

Lt Col Nick Kitson

Winning hearts and minds

So why was the bazaar so significant? Well, because that was the source of economic prosperity. And, you know, what a government does for its people is provide security and prosperity in general terms, and so therefore if we were, you know, the counter-insurgency very much and it's all, oft quoted expression of 'the battle for hearts and minds' and it is the battle for hearts and minds. It's about, you know, where, where the people are going to, direct their allegiances, and they're going to direct their allegiances towards the organisation that gives them, meets their needs in terms of prosperity and basics of life like, providing for their families.

So the bazaar was the place to me where, people could see a better future. If, mm, we provided sufficient security along with the Afghan security forces - the police and the army - that kept trouble out of the bazaar. Kept, certainly kept the fighting out of the bazaar, I mean that was our side of it. It was very difficult, of course, to understand whether anybody walking into the bazaar was a sort of a Taliban or not a Taliban or a good guy or a bad guy, so in terms of intimidation and corruption and, and illegal activities it was a bit harder for us as, as foreign military to direct that, but what we could do was you know, just secure the place physically along with the Afghans - checkpoints and all that sort of stuff - to provide, to ensure that the central areas of the bazaar were and above all the security which meant that people could trade and start to generate some of that economic prosperity and then hopefully they would say 'well, this is good, you know, life is getting better, if I've got more money in my pocket or I can get to market more easily or I can sell my goods or I can buy what I need for my family to survive, then that's good'. So there was no doubt in my mind and indeed that was a very clear understanding that we took on from our predecessors, Two Rifles and 45 Commando before them.