

## **Queen's Award for security firm**

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A HEREFORD company started in a "cupboard" has become one of Britain's biggest business success stories.

**AKE Group** has been awarded a Queen's Award for Enterprise this week having built itself out of the city's best-known brand name - SAS.

AKE founder and managing director Andrew Kain left the SAS with business success in his sights, targeting fields in which he was most familiar - the new corporate "combat zones" of security, intelligence, and training.

The Queen's Award - Mr Kain will receive at Whitehall on April 22 - is a salute to the 14 years it has taken to transform AKE from "two men in a cupboard" to a front rank player.

With an annual turnover of around £5-7 million and branches in London, Washington DC, Sydney, and Baghdad, the company's workload has more than quadrupled in the past three years alone.

Its HQ is a suite at Mortimer House, Hereford, just a corridor down from the tiny office Mr Kain shared with a single colleague at the start.

In a highly competitive environment, AKE makes a difference because it isn't gung-ho, said executive director Tim Crockett.

Instead, said Mr Crockett, security is sold as a state of mind - Who Thinks Wins - by former special forces operatives from the UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand, serving alongside cyber-specialists.

The team can be found in any of the world's trouble spots and will go "wherever clients take them", said Mr Crockett.

Right now, Iraq is where the action is. But AKE operatives were recently assisting the aid effort in tsunami stricken south-east Asia.

AKE established itself tailoring bespoke risk management and was the first firm to design and deliver a safety awareness course for reporters working in hostile environments.

A medical section tackles trauma training and health audits of remote locations.

In 2001, AKE started offering shields against cyber attack, and how to "byte" back.

That year also saw the launch of INTAKE (short for INTELLIGENCE AKE) a subject-specific "cyveillance" search system that scans the wired world at the speed of thought and is now into its second generation.

The future, said Mr Crockett, was what AKE could do for the international finance and energy sectors.

Companies apply for the Queen's Award for Enterprise in one or more of three categories - international trade, innovation and sustainable development.

The awards differ from personal honours because they recognise the team achievement of a business unit.

Winners can fly a flag that comes with the award and use its logo on the likes of letterheads and advertising.

Hereford