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Army kept chaos at bay in the north says bishop

By Staff reporter

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The British army's 38-year campaign in Northern Ireland was praised by the bishop of London yesterday for helping to keep the "forces of chaos at bay".

Dr Richard Chartres paid tribute to personnel who took part in the army's longest deployment for their ability to "stand firm" until peace could be achieved.

The bishop's made his comments in a sermon in St Paul's Cathedral during a commemoration service for members of the British armed forces who served in 'Operation Banner', as the British army officially called its operations in the north.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who was in the congregation, issued a statement also praising the army.

"They helped create conditions for the peace Northern Ireland now enjoys and today we salute their courage," Mr Brown said.

"It is in their honour and for all the people of Northern Ireland that all those committed to the province's future must work together to ensure a lasting peace."

The bishop told the congregation during the hour-long service: "Military intervention can hold the forces of chaos at bay while people learn again how communities with very different histories and aspirations can live together and do business with one another.


"Operation Banner kept that vital part to which a more hopeful future for Ulster could enter."

The British army's deployment in the north began in 1969 and ended in July last year.

More than 300,000 military personnel serve in Of those killed in the north, 763 died as a direct result of violence.

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