

Britain winds down Ulster mission

by UPI

BELFAST, Northern Ireland -- British troops in Northern Ireland were preparing Monday to end their security mission after 38 years and transforming into a new Territorial Army brigade. Operation Banner employs some 5,000 soldiers but their numbers will be reduced to about 2,000 after midnight Tuesday, The Times of London reported. Since 1969, more than 300,000 British troops have fought militants and 763 were killed in the process, the Times said. British army Col. Wayne Harber said there would be no celebration. "I think that everyone is glad that it's over," he told The Times. "I've only got 27 years' experience here but there have only been one set of losers: the people of Northern Ireland. "You should not have the army on your streets -- it is an aberration." In the foreword to the summarizing report, British army Gen. Michael Jackson wrote the operation was "the longest to date; one of the very few waged on British soil; and one of the very few ever brought to a successful conclusion by the armed forces of a developed nation against an irregular force."

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