

Media Release

Defence Force ceremony to mark 857 days service

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Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Minister Gerry Brownlee and Defence Minister Dr Jonathan Coleman have paid tribute to members of the New Zealand Defence Force for their dedicated service to Christchurch on the eve of their longest ever domestic deployment.

"Tomorrow afternoon around 120 members of the Army, Navy and Air Force will be thanked in person by Prime Minister John Key for their duty to Christchurch," Mr Brownlee says.

"They will be officially dismissed from duty at 2pm in Worcester Boulevard, and I'd urge members of the public to come along and thank Defence Force members for their service to our city.

"While tomorrow will bring to a close the service of hundreds of soldiers who have manned the cordon around Christchurch's battered central city for the past 857 days, it is also an opportunity to thank members of the Navy who helped bring supplies to the city when we most needed them, and the Air Force, who played a significant role ferrying people and goods in the immediate aftermath of the quakes.

"This is a physical and psychological milestone of great significance, with the official cordon now gone and large parts of the city which have for so long only been viewed at a distance open to the public."

The original CBD cordon was 387 hectares.

Defence Minister Dr Jonathan Coleman says the New Zealand Defence Force deserves appreciation for its longest ever domestic deployment.

"Along with Police, Fire and Ambulance staff, the Defence Force were able to respond to the immediate needs of those worst affected in the days following the February quake, and this has been followed by keeping the extremely dangerous central city area locked down to all but those who have needed to be in there.

"Working on two month rotations and shifts of 12 hours a day, five days a week, has been a challenging task.

"Initially manned by the Regular Force, soldiers from our Reserve Forces took over the cordon, allowing their colleagues to return to their normal duties.

"I acknowledge the impact their service has had on their families. I also acknowledge the employers of our Reserve Forces who made it possible for some members to return several times to the city to help."

The Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) has worked with the Christchurch City Council, SCIRT, the Fire Service, Police and a variety of other agencies and services to ensure the streets are safe for public use and the necessary infrastructure repaired.

<https://youtu.be/sfXGwoihx0M>

This announcement was originally published on cera.govt.nz and beehive.govt.nz