

# Greek Army bars way to migrants

FROM JAMES PETTIFER IN KAPSTICA

HIGH up here in the mountains on the Greek-Albanian border, the Greek Army is starting the "Balkan Plan" to close the border to illegal immigrants, and block passage to the thousands of Albanians who are starting to move south towards Greece.

The "Balkan Plan" was leaked from the Greek Foreign Office this week, and is designed to seal the 7,500-mile border from Turkey to Albania, but the remote terrain and sheer numbers of people are likely to make it difficult. The Greek police have had roadblocks in operation for a long while, but they often function lethargically. The army will be a tougher nut to crack, and troops on road patrol are beginning to make their presence felt.

Many migrants are victims of Albania's collapsed pyramid schemes and feel they have little choice but to go south.

At the moment migrant numbers are in their thousands, not the tens of thousands everyone expects when the spring comes and the

remote mountain tracks become more usable.

A key issue for Greek military will be its terms of operation. A Greek policeman, Militades Andreopoulos, was arrested and charged with manslaughter here on Wednesday for shooting an Albanian migrant. In general, the police have tried to run a humane border regime. But now the army is involved the realities of numbers of people and landscape mean that, unless they have some threat of force to use, they are likely to be as ineffective as the police in stopping the flow of poor and desperate people into Greece.

