

# Greece has Stasi files 'that name the terrorists'

**From John Carr**  
in Athens  
**and Michael Evans**  
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GREECE holds files from the Stasi secret police that name members of the 17 November terrorist group, according to a former minister.

Yesterday's claim by Stelios Papathemelis, who was Minister of Public Order in the Greek Government in the mid-1990s, came as Scotland Yard officers who flew to Athens on Thursday began investigating the murder of Brigadier Stephen Saunders, a British defence attaché. British sources said that the East German secret police had kept files on "everything" and considered it likely that there would be secret records on the organisation, which yesterday admitted the killing. Stasi files were passed to Western Governments when East Germany collapsed.

Mr Papathemelis told Greek television that during his term of office a set of Stasi files arrived from Germany. He had not examined them but was aware that they contained information identifying members of 17 November.

He said he believed that the files remained in the ministry, and that no action had been taken. Soon after the files turned up in 1995, Mr Papathemelis was replaced as Pub-

lic Order Minister by a Socialist, Sifis Valyrakis, who had been convicted of bombings by a court martial in 1972, during the Greek colonels' regime.

However, Mr Valyrakis, a guest on the same chat show, denied that the files had anything to do with 17 November. "The material dealt with an assignment given to the international terrorist, Carlos," he said, without going into detail.

In its 14-page statement about the killing of Brigadier Saunders, the 17 November group said: "We decided to execute him because he took part in the planning of the barbaric air strikes on Yugoslavia." The group said it had chosen to kill a British officer not just because Britain was actively involved in the Nato bombing campaign, but because British policy "surpassed the audacity and cynicism even of the Americans".

Last year's Kosovo campaign was opposed by most of the Greek population and protests were fuelled by left-wing extremists.

British diplomatic sources said yesterday that the three Anti-Terrorist Branch officers sent to Athens were receiving "excellent co-operation" from the Greek police. Security was being increased for British Embassy staff and for Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, the Defence Procurement Minister, who is visiting Athens.

# He was my life, says brigadier's widow

From John Carr  
in Athens

THE widow of Brigadier Stephen Saunders, the British military attaché shot dead by leftwing terrorists in Athens this week, spoke yesterday of how his murder had "destroyed" her and her family.

Accompanied by her two teenage daughters, Heather Saunders struggled to read out a short statement in which she had sought to express her loss.

"Stephen was my life," she began, her voice shaky but determined. "And our lives were so deeply entwined that today I stand before you half the person I was yesterday morning."

The brilliant blue Athenian sky and masses of pink oleanders beside the gate of the Saunders family's villa, in the northern suburb of Nea Erythraia, contrasted oddly with the grief played out at the gate, from which Brigadier Saunders had set out on Thursday morning for his office at the British Embassy. He was stopped halfway there

by the bullets of the 17 November group.

Mrs Saunders said that her husband was a man committed to peace. "Throughout his 35 years in the Army, he never raised his gun to kill anyone," she said.

The statement was a veiled reference to the accusation by 17 November, whose 14-page proclamation, published in a Greek newspaper yesterday, claimed that the officer had been directly involved in the Nato bombing of Serb civilians last year.

"He was a wonderful and proud father of our two daughters," Mrs Saunders went on, her voice breaking, "who will now have to go through their lives without him. In fact, to quote both my little girls: 'He was the best daddy in the world.'" At this Nicola Saunders, 15, standing behind her mother, buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

Mrs Saunders attacked "the people who carried out this cowardly act on an unarmed man on his way to work." She said they had "destroyed me and my family". She thanked



Heather Saunders with one of her daughters, Catherine, 14, yesterday. She said of her husband: "Our lives were so entwined that I stand before you half the person I was"

the doctors and nurses at Erythros Stavros hospital in Athens for their efforts to save her husband's life. "God knows, I'm a nurse and I know what they had to do in

an impossible situation," she said.

After appealing to the Greek public for any clue that could lead to the capture of her husband's killers, she admitted

that her bitterness would linger long. "Stephen was a forgiving man," she said, her composure finally dissolving in tears. "As yet, I cannot forgive the perpetrators of this

horrible crime. God may help me to forgive in time. I don't know."

British Embassy officials said that the family would remain in Athens until early

next week, when they planned to fly home with the brigadier's body. "We have a lot of matters we have to take care of here first," Peter Millett, the deputy chief of mission, said.

#### LINKS

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