

## NEWS

# Please help catch wicked men who killed my husband

By David Graves in Athens

THE widow of the British defence attaché murdered in Athens appealed to all Greeks yesterday for help to trap the killers of her "wonderful, loving" husband.

Heather Saunders appeared at the gates of her family's two-storey villa in the northern Athens suburb of Kifissia, flanked by her distraught teenage daughters, to pay public tribute to her husband.

Twenty-four hours earlier, Brig Stephen Saunders, her husband of 17 years, was assassinated while driving to work at the British Embassy.

Reading from a prepared statement, she broke down several times as she spoke of him as a man who had never raised his gun to kill anyone during his 35 years in the Army, despite coming under fire in Northern Ireland.

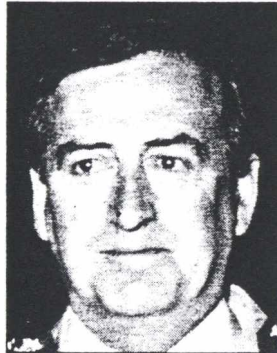
He was a "wonderful, loving man" who was her life. "Our lives were so deeply entwined that today I stand before you half the person I was yesterday morning," she said.

Her daughters, Nicola, 15, and Catherine, 13, could not contain their grief. Nicola buried her head in the shoulder of a relative who had flown with them from London to Athens.

Catherine, shaking with emotion, said she "hated" her father's killers. "Please catch them," she said. "My dad was the best dad in the world."

Mrs Saunders, who comes from Northern Ireland, where her husband served several tours of duty in the Army, knew the risks her husband encountered during his service career.

She was also well aware of the



Loving: Stephen Saunders

dangers facing Western diplomats serving in Athens from the Left-wing November 17 terror group.

She turned to hug her daughter. "Don't worry, darling," she told her. "They will catch them."

The killing has shocked many Greeks. On the Olympic Airways flight from London, the pilot had apologised to Brig Saunders's daughters over the public address system for their father's murder.

George Papandreou, the Greek foreign minister, went to the house yesterday morning to see the family and offer his personal condolences.

The 52-year-old brigadier, who planned to retire in three years, was a man known by his neighbours for his good humour and generosity.

They often saw him on his regular strolls around the area. He was also a warden at the local St

Peter's Anglican church in Kifissia. Mrs Saunders, described by friends as a "very strong woman", decided to speak publicly about her husband to gain as much publicity as possible for the hunt to catch his murderers.

She recalled that when he had come under fire in Ulster, he had hesitated from shooting the gunman in case he hit an innocent bystander.

"He was a wonderful and proud father of our two daughters, who now will have to go through their lives without him. In fact, to quote my little girls, 'he was the best daddy in the world'. They loved him very much.

"I only hope that the people who carried out this cowardly act on an unarmed man simply travelling on his way to work will realise the total devastation they have caused. Not only have they killed my husband, they have destroyed me and my family."

Mrs Saunders continued: "I would like to thank the Greek people for all their help and support at this awful time. I especially want to thank the doctors and nurses at the Red Cross Hospital who tried so hard to save Stephen's life. They did what they could in an impossible situation.

"We must make sure this never happens again. I appeal to the Greek people and to anyone who knows anything, because someone must know something about this terrible murder. We must prevent this kind of thing from happening again.

"Anyone who saw anything, anyone who knows anything,



"They have destroyed us all": Heather Saunders in Athens yesterday with one of her daughters

please tell the police so that no one else has to go through what we are going through today. The Greek people are not responsible for what happened yesterday but for the sake of the future of Greece these wicked men must be brought to justice."

She added: "Stephen was a forgiving man. As yet, I cannot forgive the perpetrators of this horrible crime. But God may help me

to forgive in time. I don't know." A book of condolence was opened at the British Embassy in Athens.

Diplomats from other embassies in the Greek capital queued to sign it. Many floral tributes were also sent to the embassy from other foreign missions and by ordinary Greeks angered by the shooting.

Brig Saunders's body will be flown back to London on Tuesday

Pictures: EPA and AP

## Greece in vow to find the terrorists

By David Graves in Athens

GREECE promised to bring the killers of Britain's defence attaché in Athens to justice last night following confirmation by the Marxist November 17 terror group that it shot Brig Stephen Saunders.

Stung by international condemnation of its poor record in fighting terrorism, the Greek prime minister and foreign minister told Baroness Symons, the minister for defence procurement that their government would "do everything possible" to catch the killers.

Costas Simitis, the prime minister, called a cabinet meeting to discuss the killing. He called it a "barbaric act" and promised a vigorous clampdown on the terrorists. "I personally pledge that we will do everything possible to fight terrorism," he said.

Lady Symons reported on her talks with the Greek ministers to Tony Blair last night.

No members of November 17, which has murdered 23 people have been caught.

In a 13-page statement sent to an Athens newspaper, the terrorists said they killed Brig Saunders, 52, in retribution for Britain's role in the "barbaric" Nato bombing of Yugoslavia.

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The Daily Telegraph 10/6 p.23.

## How Greeks mistreat our troops

SIR—I am not surprised at the murder of Brig Stephen Saunders in Athens (report, June 9). As a former soldier, who was involved in the Kosovo conflict, I spent many weeks working in the port of Thessaloniki.

It is not easy to explain to soldiers why, in a fellow Nato country, they are surrounded by anti-Nato posters and graffiti, or why, in an EU member state, they are confined to port, sometimes living in a filthy, rat-infested shed.

In which other Nato country would a French Army fuel tanker be stopped by a mob which tried to set it alight? Or the gates of a Nato headquarters be ripped from their hinges? At Thessaloniki, troops had bricks thrown at them, and were made to watch the Union flag being burnt on top of their trucks while they were taunted to get out.

Over the May Day weekend last year, several thousand Communists marched on the port, and were eventually allowed through the gates by local police. The Nato troops were forbidden from defending their equipment since they were in a "friendly" country. But perhaps the worst incident involved a reconnaissance squadron of the Household Cavalry on its way to Macedonia. The train was mobbed just outside

the port, windows were smashed and Scimitar-tracked vehicles vandalised and defaced with Nazi and Communist symbols. An unsuccessful attempt was made to board the passenger coaches.

The troops inside behaved impeccably, but several were amazed to see Greek television cameras waiting for them in the railway yard before the mob attacked and a ring of police behind, rather than in front of, the rioters. One police officer was seen speaking to the rioters and laughing with railway staff seconds before the violence began.

After several months in Greece, even the youngest member of my Royal Logistic Corps unit could see that the Greek authorities were either incompetent or in cahoots with the extremists. Thessaloniki is still used to resupply Nato forces in theatre, and remains an easy target. But Brig Saunders's murder must signal a change, not least by the Greek authorities.

Having handed in my body armour, I certainly won't be queuing for tickets for the 2004 Olympics. Greece must decide whether it faces East or West. She has had long enough to think about it.

MARCO CIOTTI  
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