## **EUROPE**

## Greece blocks EU accord with Nato

By Judy Dempsey, Diplomatic Correspondent, in Brussels

Greece vesterday blocked an agreement forged last week between diplomats and Turkey that gave the European Union access to Nato's assets once a 60.000-strong European rapid reaction force is established in 2003.

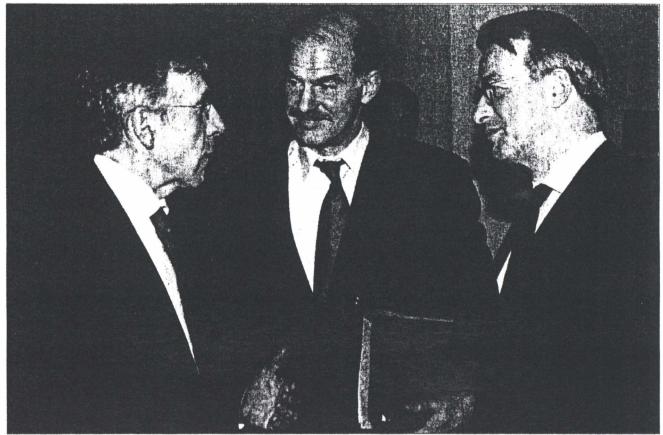
The unexpected deal, negotiated by UK. US and Dutch diplomats with Turkey, ended a two-vear dispute that threatened to create a European Security and Defence policy (ESDP) separate from Nato in a way that would lead to costly duplication in certain military equipment.

EU foreign ministers had vesterday hoped to seal the accord ahead of the EU summit at the end of this week in Laeken. That would have entailed the EU and Nato exchanging letters setting out the extent of their co-operation.

It would also have spelt out how the Europeans would have assured access to Nato planning, a critical element if the rapid reaction force was to carry out any missions independent of

George Papandreou. Greece's foreign minister. said his government had problems with the EU's letter to Nato since it failed to address Greece's own secuwas up and running.

EU that once the rapid reacway that would damage is decided.



George Papandreou, Greek foreign minister (centre) in conversation with his counterparts Jack Straw of the UK (left) and Jozias Van Aartsen of the Netherlands (right)

Greece's security interests.

rity concerns once ESDP. This was an implicit refer-tight guarantees that the military council received means showing they are the reconstruction of southence to Cyprus and the deal with Turkey would not assurances that ESDP would fighting for their interests east Europe. Mr Busek, a for-Diplomats said Greece Aegean, two areas in dispute undermine the EU's auton not be used against their even though in principle the mer Austrian vice-chancellor wanted assurances from the between Greece and Turkey, omy, Indeed, Turkey, a lead national security interests. An ESDP operation ing Nato member, had Diplomats said Greece was accord," said one. tion force was in place, it requires unanimity of mem threatened to use its right of holding out more for politi 

EU foreign ministers bach, former aide to Gerwould not be used in any ber states before any mission veto to block the Europeans' cal reasons, "Greek officials named Austrian Erhard access to Nato assets. It have to sell this deal to their Busek as head of the Stabil- Schröder.

Athens also wanted water- dropped its objections after own public opinion. That ity Pact, which helps with

government accepts the and expert on the Balkan region, replaces Bodo Hommany's Chancellor Gerhard