

Greece admits poor strategy on terrorism

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By Kerin Hope in Athens

Greece's Socialist government yesterday admitted its record on fighting terrorism was unsatisfactory after a prominent opposition deputy was injured in a bomb blast outside his home in Piraeus port.

Vassilis Michaloliakos, a deputy for the New Democracy party, was hit by flying glass and marble fragments. Witnesses said the bomb was detonated by two young men on a motorcycle as Mr Michaloliakos entered his apartment block on Sunday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. But experts said it might have been staged by November 17, a leftwing terrorist group that has carried out 23 assassinations since the mid-1970s. None of its members has been arrested.

A government spokesman said results so far from a stepped-up campaign against terrorism were "not what we'd hoped for". The public order ministry overhauled the police's counter-terrorism unit and began co-operation with UK experts after the assassination last June of Brigadier Stephen Saunders, military attaché at the British Embassy in Athens.

Greece's efforts to crack down on terrorism have come under international scrutiny as preparations move ahead for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

The Socialists are under pressure to approve anti-terrorism legislation that would include witness protection schemes and permit terrorism trials to be held *in camera*.

Michalis Stathopoulos, the justice minister, yesterday raised fears the government might backtrack on its pledge to catch up with November 17. In an interview with the daily newspaper Kathimerini, Mr Stathopoulos said he saw "no need" for an anti-terrorism law.