

# Terror police hold Greek professor for Briton's gun murder

Thursday, 18 July 2002 Evening Standard

Colin Adamson

THE GREEK terrorist leader believed to have masterminded the assassination of British diplomat Brigadier Stephen Saunders has been arrested on a hydrofoil in the Aegean Sea hours after the discovery of the revolver used in the murder.

More than 700 Greek anti-terrorist police officers were said to have been involved in the dramatic swoop on the remote island of Lipsi and have flown the man by helicopter to an interrogation centre in Athens. British investigators are said to be present during the questioning today.

The unnamed man, reported to be the possible founding member of the ultra left-wing November 17, Greece's most notorious guerrilla group, is described as a 62-year-old professor.

His French wife, who is reportedly of Basque origin,



Helen Saunders who told how she watched husband Brigadier Stephen Saunders, left, gunned down in Greece

has also been detained. Defence attaché Brigadier Saunders, 52, was gunned down on his way to the British Embassy in June 2000, by two masked men on a motorbike. They also used a G-3 automatic rifle that had been stolen years earlier in a raid on a police station.

Brigadier Saunders's widow, Heather, told an inquest how she watched him dying and made an impassioned plea to the Greek authorities to hunt

down his killers. Police today confirmed that the arrests were a direct result an earlier raid on an address, owned or rented by the professor in Athens.

They said ballistic tests had linked the gun, a .45 revolver, which was among an arsenal of weapons found, to the murders of seven people, including Brigadier Saunders and a Greek politician.

Inhabitants of Lipsi have told of how a heavily armed anti-terrorist squad

detained the academic after he had boarded a hydrofoil for the nearby island of Palamos. He was apparently preparing to flee to Turkey.

According to a police source, the man was known in his hometown as professor Michalis Economou, but his real name is Alexander Yiotopeoul.

Police say he was a lecturer in social sciences at universities in Italy and France. His original contact and training with hardline leftist activism

began through his participation in organisational cells of the May 1968 uprising in Paris.

The turning point in the investigation came as a 40-year-old man, Savvas Xiros, was wounded when a bomb he was carrying exploded prematurely. He is said to be co-operating with prosecutors in return for favourable treatment.

The 17 November group has been blamed for a total of 23 killings.

