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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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SUBJECT/S: Yuan Xiaoliang and Yang Hengjun, Talisman Sabre, South China Sea, Iran

SABRA LANE: The Deputy Labor Leader and Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles joins the program now. Good morning and welcome to the program.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Good morning Sabra. How are you.

LANE: Mr Marles, could I ask you a response to the Yuan Xiaoliang situation? Lawyer Rob Stary says that Australia should intervene robustly on this. What should the government be saying?

MARLES: Well the steps that the government have taken in making it clear to the Chinese Government that if the only reason that Mr. Yang is being detained is because of his political views and he should be released it is an important step to take and we support it. It's hard to know of course in Opposition exactly

all the steps that the government is taken but we are comforted by the fact that the Foreign Minister has also said that they have repeatedly raised Mr. Yang's case with the Chinese Government and we appreciate that as well. From there I think it's important to leave the delicate work of a consular matter like this to the diplomats who are professionals in this space. I mean, I've seen this work up close and it really is important that they're given the opportunity to do that without excessive rates and politicians in Australia.

LANE: But what about the wife? She sought help on the weekend through a friend to Chongyi Feng, who's written in the Nine-Fairfax papers today and that with denial, he also asked for an escort. He says that Australia's just been too soft and it could have demanded both Yang's immediate release earlier this year and should be doing so now.

MARLES: Well I've seen the reports this morning and so I know what's being said there but again it's difficult to comment exactly without knowing what the government has to say about those reports. I come back to the fact that it is important to make the principal statement to the Chinese Government that if Mr. Yang is being held solely because of his political views then he should be released. And that the manner in which he is being dealt with needs to be fair and transparent. They are important representative representations to make, it's an important statement of principle to make and we join in making it. The detail of this, we really do need to leave it in the hands of the consular officials who are working on the case.

LANE: All right. Australia tried the loud approach with soccer player Hakeem al-Araibi this year in Thailand, that worked. Why not try a similar approach here?

MARLES: Again, having seen a number of consular matters up close and in a sense having been inside the tent in the past and known the detail of how these operations work; it is really horses for courses that no two consular cases are the same. The circumstances and the details here really matter. I don't have the details at hand because they're not in the public domain. We do need to have

faith in the Australian diplomats who are working on this and what I can say is having worked with them in the past. They are among the best diplomats in the world and I'm sure they're doing everything they can to assist with Mr. Yang's release.

LANE: Alright. Closer to home a high tech Chinese spy ship is heading to the waters of Queensland and it is assumed it will monitor the massive military exercise Talisman Sabre which starts this week. Australia is not protesting this. Do you expect that Australia would be treated the same way if we sailed through the South China Sea?

MARLES: Well ultimately the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is very important to Australia's national interests and we need to be asserting that everywhere, around the world- in our waters waters off the Australian coast but also in the South China Sea. And that's been our consistent position and I guess in that respect it's important to understand that China is not breaking those rules here. I think that this occurred when Talisman Sabre occurred two years ago. I don't actually think it's a huge deal. Certainly Talisman Sabre is a very important exercise for both Australia and the United States. And our servicemen and women will get on doing the business of of the exercise and I don't think the presence of a Chinese vessel is going to face them at all.

LANE: It's not breaking the rules as you say but if the roles were reversed do you think that China would sort of take it like Australia is?

MARLES: Well I think the way to think this through is the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea matters to us. It matters to us because as a trading nation with so much of our trade going by sea and indeed most of it going through the South China Sea, it is really important that we assert the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and that we do everything we can to uphold it. Now if that's our position globally and if that's our position in respect of the South China Sea- and it has been a very steadfast way- then obviously we have to accept that those same rules in waters off the Australian coast, and I think that's what

guides the decision now.

LANE: Should Australia be part of any coalition that the US puts together to confront Iran?

MARLES: Oh look I think that's a fair way down the track. And certainly any requests- and I don't understand that there has been a request from the United States here- but any requests of that kind would need to be considered extremely carefully. Obviously the rhetoric that's going on in relation to Iran at the moment is concerning. It's certainly a source of anxiety for the Middle East but the globe more generally. But I think that request and those actions are a few steps down the road from here.

LANE: All right. Deputy Labor leader Richard Marles thanks for joining the program this morning.

MARLES: Thanks Sabra.

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Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.