



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
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SUBJECT: China.

JOURNALIST: How concerning are these reports that an alleged plot to put a Chinese agent into the Australian Parliament?

MARLES: Well obviously these are very concerning allegations that have been made. The fact that we've now seen a very rare statement from ASIO in the aftermath of that adds to the concern that, I think, we would all feel in relation to this. Anthony Albanese has sought a briefing from our agencies as soon as possible but it's really important that we're now hearing from the Government, from the Prime Minister, from the relevant Ministers about this matter as soon as possible.

JOURNALIST: But as you say; adds to the legitimacy of the concerns that ASIO is coming out publicly.

MARLES: Well the fact that ASIO has made a very rare statement today adds to the seriousness of these allegations. It's very important that we are hearing from the Prime Minister and from the relevant Ministers on this matter as soon as possible.

JOURNALIST: Mr Zhao's death that appears to be incredibly suspicious in the hotel. What did you think of that?

MARLES: Well I have seen the reports. Obviously we would like to get a proper briefing from the agencies in respect of that, that's what Anthony Albanese has sought straight away it's impossible to comment on that matter otherwise. But again for all of this, that's why it's very important that we're hearing from the Prime Minister and from the relevant Ministers on this question as soon as possible.

JOURNALIST: Does the Chinese spy seeking protection in Australia deserve asylum?

MARLES: Well we are a rule of law country. We have a person here who has claimed asylum, and on the basis of that claim now should be assessed in accordance with Australian law, and that process should now play out.

JOURNALIST: But if he is a spy, and these facts line up, would you support him being given asylum?

MARLES: Well we are a rule of law country, and this is a matter which should now play out in accordance with the rules around how asylum is assessed in accordance with the obligations we have, for example on the refugee convention, and that's the way it should now play out, given that this gentleman has now claimed asylum.

JOURNALIST: And what do you think this means for the relationship more broadly between China and Australia? Obviously we're seeing now really serious allegations being put forward of foreign espionage and interference being conducted on Australian soil. What does it mean for the relationship?

MARLES: Yeah, well all of these matters obviously are difficult in the context of the relationship. The relationship remains a fundamentally important relationship to Australia. It's very important that we have an overarching guiding philosophy behind how Australia manages its relationship with China. That's something I don't actually see coming from the Government but it's important that that exists, particularly given that there are issues like this which have arisen in the context of the relationship.

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