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Bill Shorten demands answers on Timor spying raids

BEN PACKHAM THE AUSTRALIAN DECEMBER 04, 2013 10:31AM



Opposition leader Bill Shorten says he will be asking for an update about ASIO raids on a lawyers office in connection with East Timor's spying allegations. Picture: Ray Strange Source: TheAustralian

THE opposition will demand a briefing on spy raids on an espionage whistleblower and a Canberra lawyer representing Timor over Australian bugging claims.

The raids follow allegations that Australian spies bugged the cabinet room of East Timor to help Woodside petroleum in oil and gas negotiations.

"We shall be asking for an update from the government about the matters which have been reported yesterday about the raid on the lawyer's office," he said.

He said all security agencies should "promote the national interest consistent with their legislative remit", but declined to comment further.

"Our relationship with Timor-Leste is an important relationship. Australia has been there with Timor-Leste since independence and a lot of Australians have worked hard to build that relationship," Mr Shorten said.

"I'm not today going to try and start affecting that relationship, giving personal opinions."

Lawyer **Bernard Collaery** (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/spies-swoop-on-canberra-office/story-fn59nm2j-1226774573512#>) said Australia's domestic spy agency sent between 15 and 20 officers to raid his Canberra law practice, and had cancelled the passport of his star witness - a former Australian spy turned whistleblower - making it impossible for him to give evidence at an

arbitration hearing in the Hague.

Greens MP Adam Bandt said he was troubled by Attorney-General George Brandis' approval of warrants for the ASIO raids.

"I'm disturbed by reports this morning that suggest that our top law officer has been using his powers to interfere with a lawyer and a witness in a court case that's going on," he said.

"If it is true it seems that George Brandis seems to think he's J. Edgar Hoover and is able to throw warrants around like confetti."

Labor's Kelvin Thomson said he was also concerned about the matter.

"If the Attorney-General decides to raid your home, or someone else's, and just says it's about national security, that doesn't make it so," he said.

"I think the Attorney-General owes the people of Australia an explanation."

Senator Brandis last night rejected suggestions the raids had been conducted to "affect or impede" the current arbitration between Australia and East Timor in The Hague.

As **reported in the Australian in May** (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/aussie-spies-accused-of-bugging-timor-cabinet/story-fn59nm2j-1226652599040>), it is alleged the Australian Secret Intelligence Service bugged the East Timorese government offices in Dili during the 2004 negotiations on the Greater Sunrise gas fields.

"The director-general of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and his deputy instructed a team of ASIS technicians to travel to East Timor in an elaborate plan, using Australian aid programs relating to the renovation and construction of the cabinet offices in Dili, East Timor, to insert listening devices into the wall, of walls to be constructed under an Australian aid program," Mr Collaery told the ABC today.

East Timor alleges that ASIS breached international law and Timorese sovereignty under a "criminal conspiracy hatched in Canberra". It claims the operation took place under the control of former foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer.

Mr Collaery likened ASIS's alleged conduct to "insider trading".

"If this had happened in Bridge Street, Collins Street, Wall Street, people would go to jail," he said.

He accused the government and ASIO of "muzzling" the prime witness in the case.