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SUBJECTS: Osprey crash; Australia-US relationship; North Korea

HOST: Well, as we mentioned at the outset, the search has been called off for those three missing marines, who are presumed dead, but will resume, and a stark reminder of the cost of those exercises between the US and Australian troops that have been ongoing.

I caught up just before the show with Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Well, this is a real tragedy, Janine, and I guess it highlights a couple of things. Firstly, how dangerous the work that Defence Force personnel do, even in peace time, even in the course of exercises. I actually was up at *Talisman Sabre* a couple of weeks ago, and you hear the stats about this, 30,000 people participated, but you've actually got to go there to get a sense of what that means on the ground, the amount of equipment, the movement of people. This thing is absolutely immense.

I saw quite a few Ospreys when I was up there operating and it just is a reminder that all of our Defence Force personnel, Australians and Americans, are dealing very heavy equipment in difficult circumstances. That's the point of the exercise, to give people that training, and this is an enormous tragedy.

It also, I think, speaks again to the fact that in moments like these Australians and Americans do stand together, so our thoughts are very much with the families of those concerned.

HOST: It's an important reminder about the alliance. Next year is the 100th anniversary of the first time Australian and Americans did fight together, in World War One, and we know we've been together in every major conflict since, and as you say it shows that even in peace time how strong those bonds are.

MARLES: I think that elevates the relationship beyond one of just an analysis of national interest. When you do the analysis of national interest it makes perfect

sense that we would have an alliance with the United States. We have shared values – democracy, the rule of law, and as countries we both seek to establish the rule of law globally - but that history of being side-by-side in the most difficult of moments over the course of a century has really elevated this beyond just that, and it now gives us a connection which I think is pretty unique. It boils down to the people. Ultimately our relationship is conducted by human beings, and that's at the highest level, in terms of government-to-government, when Julie Bishop meets with Rex Tillerson, when Malcolm Turnbull speaks with Donald Trump, but it also goes down to the everyday level. I saw it on exercise *Talisman Sabre* as Australian service personnel and US service personnel litewrally had dinner together. I was in the mess, and I was sitting there having dinner with them and they're chatting, they're laughing at the same jokes, they have the same sense of humour, we're curious about the background that all of us have.

That connection is really easy. It is deep. It is profound. It is born of a century of working together. It really does speak to how significant this relationship is.

HOST: Does it also speak to the fact that it is above and beyond whoever might, which politician's in the Oval Office at the time? It's my way of bringing in the phone call, the transcript of which was released on Friday. What were your thoughts on that, and does it have any impact on the alliance or relations?

MARLES: The answer to your first question is of course, it absolutely transcends who is the president and who is the prime minister of the day, and indeed which political party in the United States and Australia holds sway at a particular moment in time.

I think that telephone call was significant, but perhaps not in the way you might expect. When I first got reports of this phone call earlier this year, I was concerned, and now that we've seen the transcript there are a whole lot of questions that are raised about certain things that Malcolm Turnbull said, but if you put that to one side, what concerned me in an alliance sense was that an American president would speak this way to an Australian prime minister, and I guess at that moment I was quite worried, and worried about what this would mean in terms of our bilateral relationship going forward, but literally within hours of that call I received a call from the charge d'affairs, that is, if you like, the person acting as the US ambassador in this country, Jim Carruso, who spoke to me literally within a couple of hours. I guess I was on a list of a whole lot of people he was ringing around at that moment, and essentially what he was wanting to know was firstly, whether I was OK, and secondly this relationship was in a good place.

He did fantastic work in the days after that phone call, and from there we've seen the American Vice-President come to Australia, we've seen Senator John McCain come to Australia, we've seen AUSMIN take place, *Talisman Sabre*, which of course was planned before the call but is the biggest exercise that's been undertaken between Australia and America, and we saw an incredible response from the Congress in the immediate aftermath of that phone call, and it says to me that the alliance is much more than just two people, and the affection for Australia and America has been overwhelming. It makes me actually feel like the relationship is in a really good place.

HOST: Just picking up on that, though, not all your colleagues probably share the same attitude about Donald Trump and the White House. Penny Wong has indicated in the past that perhaps we need to be a bit more independent in our thinking from the US. There has been some mutterings, certainly from your side, that given what's happening perhaps we shouldn't be quite as close or beholden. You don't sound like you're in that camp at all.

MARLES: Well, firstly we're not beholden. Beholden isn't a word that I would describe in the context of our relationship with the US. It is of course very close, and I think it's a mutual relationship. There are spheres where we expect America to lead and we want to know what they're going to do, but there are spheres where America expects us to lead and they want to know what we want to see happen, and the Pacific is a good example of that.

I don't for a moment suggest that President Trump doesn't throw up a whole lot of challenges for our relationship, and I think that's the point that Penny's been making, and in that I agree. There are going to be moments where we going to need to criticise the United States, and the immigration order, for example, earlier in the year that the President put in place, of course was knocked of by the courts but something has then occurred subsequently, that demands criticism. An immigration policy which is effect avowedly based on discriminating on the basis of religion is something which needs to be condemned no matter which country is seeking to put that in place. That's not instinctive or reflexive for someone like me, but we need to be doing that, and it's really important that we are prepared to criticise. That is absolutely the case, and that's, I think, a point that Penny makes, and in that I completely agree.

If you look at our strategic interest going forward, the shared values that we have with the United States - we're both democracies, we both have the rule of law at home, and, more importantly, we both seek to establish the rule of law globally, which provides predictably – all of that remains the case, and it's really that which has been the foundation of our trading with the globe and our prosperity that we've drawn from that, and we obviously need to be supporting that.

HOST: Just on this issue of the strong Congressional support for Australia, we were both at the Australian American Leadership Dialogue this weekend, the 25th anniversary. They got a strong delegation, a 4-man delegation from Congress. Relations did seem very strong. What was the message, because obviously what was said in the Dialogue is off the record, but what the overall message you got on the strength of the alliance from the Dialogue this weekend?

MARLES: I suppose the first observation I'd make is in a sense drawn from what you've just said. Four members of Congress coming out to Australia, I'm not sure I can remember as strong a Congressional delegation as that as part of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue for a Dialogue which is happening here in Australia, so it was fantastic to see that, but it was also, I think the seniority of those from the media, those from business, those from the military, the head of NSA, Admiral Mike Rogers, was present, it was a really serious delegation, and to me that sends a message upfront.

I think the second issue is there has been a general question, I guess, about whether or not we are seeing any form of an American retreat from the world: in an environment where you see America having a shrinking share of global GDP, is this being reflected in some way in terms of America's presence in the globe, and particularly in East Asia?

I guess going to the Dialogue, that was the question I wanted to get a sense about, and I've got to say as that was interrogated during the couple of days, I got the absolute sense that America is in East Asia. It's here to stay. It's very present. That's how I feel over the last six months the US' activities in the South China Sea, obviously its focus on North Korea. A number of those things you can question and have a discussion about exactly how things are being handled, but the intent of being here does seem to be very clear, and the overwhelming message I got from the last few days was that America is here and it means to stay and that's a very good thing from our point of view.

HOST: It was also interesting that they're well aware of the challenges with this new president, but they seem to think that we were more pessimistic, I think not only about their political situation but particularly about our own.

MARLES: Well, it's a funny environment because it is done under Chatham House rules, so people can be pretty frank. Sometimes I was watching them be perhaps a little pessimistic about their own circumstances. We were being, perhaps, pessimistic about our own, and maybe that's the nature of life – you tend to be more pessimistic about your own situation and more optimistic about the others. Coming away from it I suspect both sides felt a little bit better about each other, looking at the sources of challenges that we're both dealing with.

HOST: I quickly want to ask you, final one, the UN got a unanimous resolution against North Korea. Donald Trump seems to think that's an indication, or the Trump administration, by having China join that the pressure is working. What would you say about that, just for North Korea, which is our biggest threat at the moment?

MARLES: Well, certainly North Korea is an enormous concern, and this can only be good news, and there is no doubt that seeking to engage China more in dealing with the North Korean issue is the right way to go, and it is a great that we've seen China support this resolution, as it is to a lesser degree, but still a significant degree, it's great that Russia has supported this as well, because ultimately, and China made this point, and they were right, we need the whole world working together to put the kind of pressure on North Korea that needs to be put in place in order to stop this progress [AUDIO BREAK] that it currently is. This is obviously a step in the right direction, but I don't for a moment underestimate the challenge going forward, and there's still a lot of water to go under the bridge in relation to this issue.

HOST: Shadow Minister Richard Marles, there.