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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: North Korean missile test; foreign donations

HOST: Let's go live to Geelong now. Joining me, the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles. Donald Trump says 'we will take care of it.' Other than the military option, what can he do?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Well, it is obviously a very difficult situation and the military option, we need to be very thoughtful about that because the consequences of it would be very big. It is important that we condemn this, and it's right that Donald Trump should and it's right that the Australian Government should, and I'm sure it will, and certainly we do from the point of view of Labor.

This is flying in the face of the international community on the part of the North Koreans. They continue to flout the international community, and it's a very dangerous path they are taking the world down.

HOST: And once again into the Japanese exclusive economic zone. They're holding an emergency cabinet meeting, and, well, obviously concerning for us, even more concerning for those on the front line, particularly in South Korea and our friends in Japan, as well.

MARLES: Yeah, I think that's right. Japan, South Korea, as you say are really on the front line here, and however we feel this is felt a whole lot more acutely if you're in Seoul or Tokyo, and it's right, given where the missile has landed in the Japanese exclusive economic zone that they should feel particularly aggrieved and it's important that in our condemnation of North Korea we absolutely bear in mind the contravention, in a sense, of Japanese sovereignty that's occurred here.

HOST: Let's just turn our attention to Senator Sam Dastyari. What was he thinking to be having that conversation with Huang Xiangmo, the Chinese donor. He says he hasn't received classified information, but quite clearly he hasn't denied telling him that 'your phone's probably being tapped', either. The statement is equivocal.

MARLES: The first point to be made in relation to this story is that Senator Dastyari has made clear that he has not, nor was he in a position to, disclose any confidential information, to breach any rules around national security, because he wasn't in possession of any of that information, and that's an important point to make here.

I've got to say, Kieran, I am a little confused about the source of this story, and I think that does require an explanation, and to be honest when you think about the last few months the Government is low on trust in this space, so I think we do need to understand exactly what the source of this story is.

When you come down to it in a policy sense, what we need to be doing is banning foreign donations, and what we need to be doing is setting up a foreign agents register. Now, that's what Labor's been saying for some time now, actually since the Fairfax-ABC expose in relation to foreign donations, and I think given what's come to light around foreign donations, and there have been plenty of them to the Liberal Party, it is unbelievable to me that there [AUDIO BREAK] consensus between the major parties around the banning of foreign donations and setting up a foreign agents register.

HOST: That's fine, but what about this particular matter, where Dastyari met with this individual, and we can chase it down a rabbit hole as to the source. It's always a fool's errand, really, I think, in terms of journalists' sources, but these are credible journalists we're talking about: James Massola, Nick McKenzie, Richard Baker. They're a credible three journalists. This has not been denied unequivocally by Mr Dastyari. He could talk about gossip or whatever he likes, but he's told this individual 'don't use your phone because you're being tapped by Australian intelligence.'

MARLES: Let me make clear: not for a moment am I impugning the work of the journalists involved. I think they are doing their job and they do a good job and I would completely agree with your assessment of those individuals, so that's not my point at all.

I am confused about the source of this information, and I think there needs to be an explanation around that – not from the journalists. That's not my point. I think there needs to be an explanation around what the source of this information is.

Senator Dastyari has made it absolutely clear that he did not reveal any national security secrets or information. He wasn't in possession of-

HOST: -So it was just a hunch. It was a hunch or the vibe. What he telling him, then?

MARLES: Well, I wasn't at the conversation, so ultimately exactly what he said and what he was seeking to do he will need to answer, but what he has made clear, and this is the important point, is that he hasn't revealed any national security information, and that seems to be the content of the allegation, if you like, that's being made by our political opponents: that somehow Senator Dastyari has broken national security rules or divulged confidential information. He's made it clear that is absolutely not the case. That's the important point to make here-

HOST: -Sure, but the other important point is, has Labor been briefed on the risk, the security risk, of foreign nationals like this individual, particularly in terms of links to the Chinese authorities?

MARLES: I haven't been briefed on that individual. I can say that, and I haven't been briefed in general about this. I think where you get to in a policy sense going forward, and this is the point I was making earlier, what matters here is that we need to be banning foreign donations. That is really important in terms of the political integrity, the democratic integrity, of our government institutions. That is-

HOST: -Would you advise Senator Dastyari to be a bit more careful about what he says to foreign donors from now on?

MARLES: No-one has paid a bigger political price in terms of this whole affair than Senator Dastyari, so I reckon Sam is completely and acutely aware of the need to be careful.

What I don't understand is why the Prime Minister isn't coming to the party in terms of doing what needs to be done around the banning of foreign donations and a foreign agents register, because that is the policy solution to all of this going forward, and it's really that question which the Prime Minister needs to answer.

HOST: I'll get to that with Alex Hawke in just a moment. Richard Marles, thanks so much for that live from Geelong. We'll talk to you soon.

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