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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
ABC RADIO NATIONAL - *DRIVE*
TUESDAY, 12 JUNE 2018**

SUBJECTS: *Singapore summit*

HOST: So is this the breakthrough on regional security observers had been hoping for? Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles joins me now. Welcome back to *RN Drive*.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Good evening, Patricia. How are you?

HOST: Good. Is this a turning point in regional security?

MARLES: I hope so. Often we know whether turning points have happened a bit further down the track, but it's a very significant day, obviously, and the world does feel safer when you look at those two men talking to each other and working through issues as opposed to what we've seen over the last 12 to 18 months, which has at times been terrifying.

HOST: North Korea has committed to working towards full denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, but there were many who wanted tougher language about that denuclearization. In practical terms, is this a satisfactory outcome?

MARLES: I think our Foreign Minister was right when she said this is a step in the right direction, but there is a fair way to go. Denuclearization is the game here. We need to be seeing North Korea denuclearize. It's only until then that the threat will recede, and that we've got to this point I think is a credit to international pressure, the sanctions regime that's been put in place in relation to North Korea, and indeed I think the American engagement of China. China has played a very important role in this so it's important that they continue to play that role and they continue to be involved in this process.

What we have today is an aspiration to denuclearize. That's obviously a good thing, but it's still a long way short of the denuclearization that we need to see. I think it's

really important that the pressure that we've seen up until this point is maintained until we actually do see denuclearization in North Korea.

HOST: From Australia's perspective, what should our Government be looking for to make sure that this deal is credible?

MARLES: Well I think it's really important that the fundamental conditions which have been put in place that have led to this moment - the presentation of a harder region to North Korea and the engagement of China - they have been important in getting us here and they will continue to be important in taking us forward, and while an aspiration to denuclearize is a good thing and that is a moment that we should celebrate, I don't think we should be too sure about that. It's still a long way to go. We actually do need to see North Korea relinquish its nuclear capability, and an agreement in similar terms was signed between North Korea and the US I think back in 1993, so we've actually been at this moment before at least in terms of the language of the agreement. To be fair we've never seen a summit of this kind happened before. There is still a long way to go, but long journeys have a starting point and let's hope that today was that.

HOST: But you just mentioned the history. The history is that we've been, as you say not the summit, but certainly we've been here before. Does that make you concerned that perhaps just like we've been here before we also won't get the outcome we wanted at that time?

MARLES: I think it would be imprudent not to be concerned. It's really important that we bear in mind all factors including the history of this regime and the way they've gone about negotiations and how they've related to those negotiations after agreements have been signed. Of course that has to be a factor in the way in which we consider this going forward, which is why it's really important that the pressure that's been put in place up until this point in time is maintained and why it's also really important to know that as a significant step as it was today there is a long way to go.

Today is not the end. An aspiration to denuclearize is not the same thing as decommissioning nuclear weapons that may or may not have been constructed by North Korea, and that's what we need to see occur and that needs to be verified by observers and there does need to be a very significant apparatus of checking which is put in place to ensure that that's the road that North Korea actually takes.

Now, none of that has happened today, but that said it is clearly a significant day and I go back to where I started it: the world feels safer watching these two men talk with each other rather than sort of testing that we've seen North Korea engage in over the last two years.

HOST: Now, according to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Australia is already looking at how we could help with the verification process if North Korea does denuclearize, which is, you know, the agreement here. Can we help? Should we be helping? What would our role be?

MARLES: Well I definitely think we should be helping, and I again I'm encouraged that Julie Bishop has put that forward. We are a country in the region. This is not quite our backyard, but it's certainly in our neighborhood and it's important that we're playing our role. You know, I think providing observers in whatever team's ultimately constructed here to assess what North Korea is doing in terms of denuclearizing is a role that we could potentially play and Australians have participated in that kind of work elsewhere in the world previously. I think as a country which exists in this time zone it's important that we play what role we can and I think it is right that we should be putting ourselves forward at this moment.

HOST: Donald Trump has said he trusts Kim Jong-un. He's talked very positively about Kim Jong-un being a smart leader. Of course we all know the human rights record of that regime and the treatment of those people living in that regime. Should the US President be talking tougher about the human rights record? Are you concerned about this very soft supportive language about a leader that is a dictator?

MARLES: Well I do agree with your characterization is the starting point, and there have been very significant human rights abuses that have occurred in North Korea and we need to be very mindful of that. A summit of this kind obviously provides North Korea with a degree of legitimacy by being present at the same table as the American President.

Now, I don't criticize that because these are steps which may need to be taken in terms of getting to a world which is safer and more peaceful, but in my mind it says this: North Korea already have significant rewards, if you like, from the process up until this point in time. We now need to see some action on their part in terms of actually denuclearizing, and that's why it is really important that as significant, as nice as the words have been today - and you would expect words to be nice today - that the pressure is maintained, because that is ultimately what is going to bring about change in relation to North Korea's nuclear program.

HOST: Donald Trump has taken a very unorthodox approach to all of this. You know, before the meeting we heard that he wasn't taking briefings. He was going to go in and just get a strong sense about whether this man, Kim Jong-un, was prepared to make a deal, if he was legit, all of this sort of stuff. Has his unconventional approach been successful at this point? Do you give him any credit for the way that he's handled this crisis?

MARLES: Look, I give credit to the American administration for presenting a harder edge to North Korea and engaging China. I think that's been the formula which has led to the position that we find ourselves in right now.

As you say there's an unorthodoxy, an unpredictability, about the way in which Donald Trump does his work. I'm not a fan of that. I think it's really important that the American presidency is a job that can be looked upon with a sense of predictability, but Donald Trump is the president at this point in time and he operates in a very different way to the conventional way and ultimately this is going to be one of those cases where the proof of the pudding is going to be in the eating, and we've just got to see whether that's ultimately successful, but I actually think what has brought us to this moment is less the unpredictability and less the unconventionality and more the

formula of presenting a hard edge to North Korea and engaging China, and for that this administration and Donald Trump definitely deserve credit.

HOST: And he's been talking now, this is the President, Donald Trump, for more than an hour. We've crossed him a few times on the program, but we of course are a rolling radio program so we go back to these interviews. He's still talking for those who were interested. He has also revealed that he will be ending joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea. How do you view that?

MARLES: Well it's a bit hard for me to comment on that. I'm not aware of what he's said and in exactly the context in which he's said it, and again, you know, exercises, the message they send are often about the regularity with which exercises to be done in the past, the routine if you like, so it's hard for me to pass judgment on that.

I'd come back to the fundamental point: today has been an important day. It's been a good day and we hope it's the beginning of a very positive process, but maintaining pressure on North Korea I think is completely fundamental to achieving the outcome the world wants to see and that's the complete denuclearization of the North Korean regime. Pressure is going to continue to be important.

HOST: Richard Marles, an extraordinary day, and of course it's still unfolding. Thank you so much for your time.

MARLES: A pleasure, Patricia.

HOST: That's the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles.

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