



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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SUBJECTS: Singapore summit

HOST: For the view of the Opposition this morning I'm joined now by Labor Defence spokesman Richard Marles. Richard Marles, good morning.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Good morning, Fiona. How are you?

HOST: I'm very well, thank you. What did you make of yesterday's summit?

MARLES: I think cautiously optimistic is not a bad phrase to describe what happened yesterday. Obviously seeing these two men shake hands and talking with each other is a much more satisfying thing to watch than what we've seen over the last couple of years, particularly with testing that's been done by the North Korean regime. It's far better that people are talking than testing nuclear weapons. But there's a long way to go and an aspiration to denuclearize is the starting point from the point of view of the North Korean regime, but what we actually need to see is that denuclearization come to pass.

It's perhaps worth remembering that there was an agreement in similar terms signed between the US and North Korea back in the early '90s. We need to make sure that this one is made good on.

HOST: Certainly, an historic meeting, but did it sit easy with you to see the North Korean dictator on a level diplomatic playing field with the leader of the free world?

MARLES: I think the observation in that is that it was a good day for Kim Jong-un, and maybe that's okay if where this ultimately lead is to the denuclearization of North Korea. That's ultimately what we have to see, but there's no doubt that Kim Jong-un has got a fair bit out of this process already. What we now need to see is him deliver on it, and an aspiration to denuclearize is well and fine, and it is a starting point, but it's far from the end.

I think what that means is that the pressure that has been applied to North Korea up until this point must be maintained. It is absolutely essential that there continues to be pressure on this regime so that we actually see them give up their nuclear weapons.

HOST: Aside from that diplomatic pressure, much is also being said this morning about how to hold Pyongyang to account. What can Australia realistically do to help verify North Korea's compliance with this agreement to get rid of their nuclear arsenal?

MARLES: Well I agree with our Foreign Minister that there are roles that Australia can play and I think it's also right that we should be putting ourselves forward in the way the Foreign Minister has. This is not so much in our backyard, but it certainly is in our neighbourhood. We live in the East Asian time zone and it's important that we're playing as much of a role in this as we can, and indeed Australia has in the past have participated in international observer missions which have been responsible for seeing denuclearization happen in other countries. So, I think there are opportunities for Australia to participate, but what I was pleased to see yesterday and this morning is that we're putting ourselves forward to play that role.

HOST: Donald Trump has agreed to end joint military exercises with South Korea in North East Asia. Was this do you think too big a concession?

MARLES: Look, it's hard, I think, to make a comment on specific decisions, but you can make these observations. Firstly, as I said before, Kim Jong-un has got a lot out of this process so far and if those exercises are no longer are going to continue well then that's obviously of benefit to Kim Jong-un as well. Now, that's fine if we're it ultimately leads to the denuclearization of North Korea, but the second point is because we are a long way from that point it really is essential that we continue, the international community continues, to pursue that policy and strategy which got us to this point. It really was providing a harder edge to North Korea and, I might say, engaging China in this process, which has ultimately led to North Korea coming to the table. It's really important that those two features continue going forward: the pressure is maintained and China maintains its involvement.

HOST: So do you support the decision to end the war games, though, between American troops and Seoul?

MARLES: I'm not in a position really to comment on that. You need to know all the circumstances around this and I don't, in terms of making an informed judgment about whether this is a good idea or not.

At the end of the day what's clear in my mind is that pressure has to be maintained. That has got to be a principle here, and whilst is aspiration to denuclearize North Korea is a good start it is a long way from the end point, and it is certainly not the end point, and maintaining maximum pressure I actually think is going to be critically important to getting to the end point.

HOST: Finally, while I appreciate you don't want to play domestic politics here, I'm interested: do you think the Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, should have raised North Korea's issue of human rights in her official response to the Singapore summit?

MARLES: Human rights is obviously an issue in North Korea, and that, you know, that is not wiped over by virtue of the summit that has occurred and it has to be a part of the way in which we relate to that regime. I'm actually sure that the Federal Government understands that as well. I think comments today are very much made in the context of a meeting yesterday which is a cause for optimism. The chances of peace seem greater watching these two men talk than what we've seen over the last couple of years, and if you look back over the last 12 months it genuinely is amazing that this meeting has taken place. But there is a long way to go, and you're right that North Korea is a country which has engaged in significant human rights abuses, and we actually do need to see them denuclearize, so I think cautious optimism is probably the best phrase to describe where we're at at this moment.

HOST: OK, Richard Marles, thanks for your time this morning.

MARLES: Pleasure.

HOST: Labor Defence spokesperson Richard Marles.

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Authorised by Noah Carroll ALP Canberra