THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP

SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH MARK LEVY, 2GB, SYDNEY

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Topics: 80th Anniversary of Victory in the Pacific, defence spending, recognition of Palestinian statehood.

E&OE

MARK LEVY:

Today marks 80 years since the Victory in the Pacific. That is, when Japen accepted the terms of surrender in World War II. Almost one million Australians served in the War and 39,000 died. The anniversary comes at an interesting time, with continued uncertainty across the global community. We of course, continue to have complex trade and defence relationships in the Pacific, with close ties to both the United States and China. And while during World War II, we fought with the Japanese; 80 years later, we've committed to buying frigates from them. It's a short time for shut your change but goes to show just how quickly the world has moved and continues to, particularly when it comes to defence. I thought we'd catch up with the Shadow Defence Minister, Angus Taylor. He joins me on the line right now. Angus, good morning to you.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

G'day, Mark. Great to be with you.

MARK LEVY:

August 15th, mate, 1945 such a defining moment in our history.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

It sure was, Mark. There's no doubt about that. Victory in the Pacific marked the end of what was an extraordinary and existential threat to Australia and to what we believe in. The bombing of Darwin, submarine attack in Sydney Harbour, the fall of Singapore – it made it very real for Australians. And of course, there were 17,000 people who lost their lives fighting against Imperial Japan, 22,000 became Prisoners of War, including my wife's grandfather, at Changi, and I saw, from him and so many others, the extraordinary contribution that remarkable generation, made. Only two and half thousand still with us, and they are what Australia is about. They the most remarkable people who believe in our great country and fought for it and should be very proud of them and incredibly grateful.

MARK LEVY:

Yeah, well said, Angus. I will probably like you, have been sitting there this morning reading so many of the stories, and I put my hand up, I'm not out a huge history buff, but one thing I do respect is what our diggers did for this country, and there was one stat that really sort of brought it home for me, almost one million, or one in seven Australians served in the armed forces during the Second World War. It puts it all into perspective, doesn't it?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

It sure does. I mean, it completely consumed our country, of course, and that's what has to happen if you're fighting for what you believe in, and it's threatened. And this is the last time, of course, that we've been threatened by an authoritarian regime in our part of the world, and we had a remarkable generation of people, one in seven, who actually fought. But, you know, that six in seven, many of them were impacted in so many different ways as well, losing loved ones and so on. And it was an enormous sacrifice, and we are all reaping the benefit of it today.

MARK LEVY:

I set off the top of the show Angus that, given what's happening in other parts of the world at the moment, the Middle East, in Ukraine, where President Trump is going to sit down in Alaska with President Putin tomorrow It would serve as a stark, contemporary reminder of the immense human cost of these armed conflicts, doesn't it?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

It absolutely does. And of course, it is a reminder that authoritarian regimes can threaten what we believe in, and we should never forget that. I mean, I think there's a sense in Australia that we're okay, that there'll never be these threats. But the truth is, authoritarian regimes do threaten us; and we've seen that with Russia, we've seen that with Iran, and frankly, we're also seeing it with the Chinese Communist Party militarising it a pace that we haven't seen before, and so we should never forget that these threats are real, and that we've got to be prepared.

MARK LEVY:

Well, it's interesting you say that, because I was reminded by a story I read this morning, Ukraine's Ambassador warning of a growing threat from China and Russia as Australia marks the end of World War II and the Pacific, saying: "What happens in this country could open ap Pandora's box here.” It sounds like you agree?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

I completely agree, and I think the militarisation we're seeing of the Chinese Communist Party is real. Their values are not ours.  We do want to trade with China and we're very proud of so many of the Chinese diaspora here in Australia who have been become incredibly successful, hardworking and aspirational Australians. But the Chinese Communist Party does not share our values and we need to be realistic about the threat that is created. It's the most dangerous time since the Second World War, since 15th of August 1945, and so we've got to get serious about being prepared for that.

MARK LEVY:

Well, this is the thing, and I can't believe I have to ask this question on a day like today. If war was to break out in the Pacific and Australia was to be targeted, are we ready?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, I don't think we are, no, and it's not just me saying that. I mean, so many experts are saying that. We've had ASPI, for instance, who are a well-respected thing tank in this area, saying that we are at risk of having a ‘paper’ defence force. Now, we've got remarkable men and women in our defence force, but it is not getting the support and funding it needs. We don't have the agility we need. We're short of the people we need. The recruitment is not reaching its targets, and we don't have the local sovereign capability we need, and we are putting at risk at our most important alliances, and there's none more important than the United States in keeping peace in our part of the world. And that has been true since the Second World War. So, we've got to get serious about this. That means we've got to up our defence spending, we've got to get to 3% of GDP at least; and we've got to make sure we're spending not just on AUKUS – that's incredibly important – nuclear submarines in the Pacific right now, incredibly important capability. But we've also got a invest in the people, in other emerging technology, counter-drone technology becoming way more important. And we've got to get serious about this.

MARK LEVY:

Absolutely. Well, one last one, Angus, your line’s getting a bit dodgy there. I was pretty fired up yesterday about, Anthony Albanese, given we now have a terrorist regime applauding and celebrating his decision to recognise a Palestinian state. I never thought I would see the day or live to see the day that an Australian Prime Minister would be applauded by a terrorist regime. He's now, since said that the media needs to be careful, what propaganda they believe from Hamas. But isn't this the same Prime Minister who's fallen for propaganda in coming to a decision and reaching a point where he wants to recognise a Palestinian state?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, that's absolutely right. And he was praised by Hamas, make no mistake about it, and being praised by a terrorist organisation, is not a good endorsement of your policy. This is the wrong policy, the preconditions have not been met. We all want to see peace in the Middle East, but frankly, this is not the pathway to get there.

MARK LEVY:

Alright, Angus, I appreciate you joining us on what is a really important day. Thanks so much for your time.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Thanks, Mark.

MARK LEVY:

That's Angus Taylor, Shadow Defence Minister joining us this morning.

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