

# Australian Broadcasting Corporation

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The Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull joins Barrie Cassidy in the wake of the terror attacks in Paris.

Prime Minister, good morning. Thanks for joining us.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, PRIME MINISTER: Yes, good evening.

BARRIE CASSIDY: To be in Europe, in the region during an event such as this, what was your immediate reaction?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well one of shock and horror. The - an attack of this scale is always terrible to watch unfold, but at the same time, I was inspired by the resilience and the patriotism of the French men and women who, leaving the stadium outside of which some of the bombs had been exploded, were singing their national anthem, singing the Marseillaise. It just showed the fact that free societies like our own, like Australia's, like France's, will not be cowed by terrorism, no matter how shocking.

BARRIE CASSIDY: It was though a co-ordinated attack, multiple locations. It does seem with little sense that it was coming. Is that particularly disturbing?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: It was - yes - yes, it was clearly not a lone wolf attack, Barrie, but it was a large attack, but I - we have to recognise that while the attack in Paris has quite rightly received a great deal of attention and sympathy - a city like Paris is one that we all feel we share, whether because we've been there or because it is so celebrated in song and the movies and so forth. But we have seen just weeks ago a very large bombing attack here in Turkey and in Ankara. A few days ago we saw a very large attack in Beirut, and of course, the Russian airliner was destroyed by a bomb that is believed to have been placed there by Daesh. So this is - this is a global problem and this is why, here at the G20, as the Turkish President and I were discussing this issue of a collective response, of cooperation, of mutual support with a common purpose of combating and defeating terrorism of this kind has to be undertaken and it will be a - one of the major items on the agenda of this G20. It was always going to be, but it will be made more so in the wake of the shocking attack in Paris.

BARRIE CASSIDY: And because of the recent history that you just outlined, does this give you a sense that this could happen anywhere, any time?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well I don't think we can - we can't mitigate - we can't pretend the risk is not there. But we have to recognise that the security forces spend - security agencies spend their days ensuring that these attacks do not occur, and of course, most of the attacks they succeed in thwarting. But it is the one that occurs, of course, that becomes the tragic destruction of life we saw in Paris. Now, for our own country, in Australia, we have the best security agencies in the world. I've - I'm very confident in their collective ability to keep us safe. Just since the - even though I've been travelling here in Europe and now in Turkey, the - I've been staying in the closest contact with the Director-General of Security, the head of ASIO, the Commissioner of the Federal Police, the Director of Counter-Terrorism and my

ministerial colleagues. And I was speaking with them just a few moments ago again and they are paying the closest attention to coordinating with their counterparts in France and ensuring that Australia and Australians are kept safe at home, and so far as we can, abroad.

**BARRIE CASSIDY:** And reports that one of the terrorists came into France last month with the wave of refugees, is that of a particular concern, that they can conceal themselves in this way?

**MALCOLM TURNBULL:** Well the - in terms of refugees coming to Australia, they are all, as you know, and always have been, carefully screened and that is ensuring that their antecedents, their backgrounds are as stated and that they do not pose security risks is a very high priority. And I discussed this matter just a moment ago with the Commissioner of the Federal Police and the Director of ASIO. And the - while there have been some exceptions, the history of terrorist activities in Australia and people of concern in this area is very much for the most part second and third-generation Australians. So, the - that - the screening of refugees, humanitarian - of the humanitarian intake has been very careful.

**BARRIE CASSIDY:** And if, as seems likely, this is at least in part a reaction to events in Iraq and Syria and given our involvement there, are we then at a greater risk as a result?

**MALCOLM TURNBULL:** Well we cannot allow our national security or our national security policies to be dictated to by terrorists. They want us to bend to their will and we will not. They want us to be frightened. They want us to change the way we go about our lives. They want us to back off standing up for freedom and standing up for the values that we are committed to. They want to establish, as they have done in parts of Syria and Iraq in this region, they want to be able to establish a religious tyranny, one that, as the President of Indonesia was saying to me only a few days ago, one that is at odds, completely contrary to the precepts of Islam that his country men and women practise. As President Widodo said, these terrorists commit a double crime. They are murderers, they are mass murderers, they are barbarians, but at the same time, they also defame religion. They defame - they blaspheme, they defame Islam. And the President of Turkey, President Erdogan, another large Muslim country, made exactly the same points to me today. This is - this challenge, this threat from terrorists who murder in the name of God but are utterly godless, they - they're very much in the forefront of the thinking of the leaders of leading Muslim nations and they recognise that these people are defaming the religion of their own - of their own countries.

**BARRIE CASSIDY:** But could I go back to the last question? Given our involvement in Syria, is there a need to change the level of the terrorism alert here in Australia?

**MALCOLM TURNBULL:** The ASIO and the AFP of course consider the alert level all the time and the alert level, as I said, from Berlin has been - has been kept at high, which is where it has been since September last year. So at this stage, the advice is that there is no need to change the alert level, but that is being monitored constantly.

**BARRIE CASSIDY:** Do we review in any way our role in Syria? Do we play an even bigger role, as former Prime Minister Tony Abbott has suggested in a newspaper interview? He says that, "As long as the caliphate exists in Iraq and Syria, then that will continue to inspire these sorts of attacks." Should we do more in Syria?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Well, Barrie, there is no doubt that the - that it is important to defeat Daesh in the field. It is important to defeat them militarily. That is true. And I've spent the best part of an hour today discussing that very matter with President Erdogan, who of course is very - is closest to the scene. There are 2.5 million refugees from that conflict within his own borders, within Turkey. So, the - there's no question that defeating Daesh in the field is vitally important. But how it is done is another matter, and certainly Australia is playing a very significant part. In terms of the foreign nations that are committing military resources to the theatre, we are second only to the United States. Ultimately, there will have to be a political solution. The military angle is very important. It is very important that Daesh is confronted and defeated militarily, but longer term, the stability of Syria, the stability that will enable those millions of refugees to return to their homes will depend on a political solution and that of course is what is being pursued in the talks in Vienna and elsewhere.

BARRIE CASSIDY: And based on what we and the rest of the world learns from what happened in Paris, what about response mechanisms in Australia? Because as a federal system, it still seems as if the states take the lead and then there can be a call-out for federal authorities. That situation hasn't been reviewed in a very long time. Is it time to look at that?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: The interaction and cooperation between the state and federal security forces, police and both state and federal and territory of course and ASIO is very good. The level of cooperation is very high. I've found just in the relatively short time I've been Prime Minister that state police commissioners are very accessible to me and of course they are working very closely with Duncan Lewis at ASIO, Andrew Colvin at the Federal Police, Greg Moriarty, the Director of Counter-Terrorism, who I was also speaking with this morning. And, you know, you saw just a few weeks ago we had a conference in Canberra that I convened to discuss the way in which we can further cooperate and enhance the collaboration in terms of countering violent extremism. So I think while we do have - we don't have one police force in Australia - we have state, federal, territory police forces - they work together very, very well.

BARRIE CASSIDY: Do we need, though, a more rapid response?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: The response has been - the response to terrorist incidents has been very rapid, Barrie. I - it has been very rapid.

BARRIE CASSIDY: Now you were due to be in Paris in a couple of weeks for the climate change summit. Is that summit still going ahead and do you plan to be there?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: The - my understanding, speaking to our ambassador in France, Stephen Brady, who has been - I should say, he and his team at the embassy have been doing a really great job in their consular efforts in identifying whether Australians have been injured. As you know, a young Australian woman from Tasmania was injured in the attack and Stephen has been with her and he has kept me updated on the developments in Paris. At this time, the French Government is planning - it's expecting that the conference of the parties, the climate change conference will go ahead and I have no doubt that it will go ahead and if it goes ahead, which I'm sure it will, I will certainly be there, as indeed will other ministers.

BARRIE CASSIDY: And just finally, summing up, what is your message this morning to the people of France and to the people of Australia?

MALCOLM TURNBULL: To the people of France, I say on behalf of the Australian people: as we have on so many occasions in the past, we stand shoulder to shoulder with you. Your battle is our battle. Your battle for freedom is our battle for our freedom. The attack in Paris was an attack on all humanity. We are in a common cause and we have a single common purpose: to defend our values and our way of life and to defeat these terrorists and their assault upon us.

To the Australian people, I can say this: we are a strong nation. We are a united nation. We are the most successful multicultural nation in the world. And we are so because of our being united in defence of our values, our values of freedom. We have strong and capable security services. They keep us safe at home, and, so far as they can, when we are abroad. We have - there's no reason to be complacent, but we have every reason to be assured that our nation is safe. We'll always be alert to threats as they develop. But we can be assured that our police, our security services are working hard to keep us safe.

BARRIE CASSIDY: Prime Minister, thanks for your time. We really do appreciate it. Thank you.

MALCOLM TURNBULL: Thank you very much, Barrie.