



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Mr Michael McCarthy

m@th

25 February 2009

Dear Mr McCarthy

RFI 20090117 – Freedom of Information Act request

I refer to your email dated 24th February, and apologise that the wrong response was sent to your request, reference RFI20090117, which was as follows:

“the records of the meeting held in November 2005 when BBC Director-General Mark Thompson travelled to Israel to hold talks with Ariel Sharon which were apparently intended to help the BBC build bridges with the state of Israel.

I'd also like to know whether, in the interests of the putative BBC impartiality he claims to uphold, he has ever held talks with Palestinian leaders in the occupied territories or indeed anywhere else.”

Mark Thompson, as Editor-in-Chief of the BBC, travelled to the Middle East for three days in November 2005. It was one of the many routine visits he made to meet staff in all parts of the BBC, to hear from the team and brief them on his future plans for the Corporation. He had recently made a similar visit to the BBC's Washington Bureau. During his visit he also took the opportunity of engaging with local people to find out their views on the BBC's output, including brief meetings with the Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

The meeting between Mark Thompson and Ariel Sharon was scheduled to take place between 18:30 and 20:15 on 9th November 2005. Time was also set aside for meetings with senior Palestinians (including Mahmoud Abbas and Diana Buttu).

We have searched through our central files for a record of any minutes relating to these meetings in 2005 and to the best of our knowledge this information is not held.



Please note that your request is outside the scope of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) because the BBC and the other public service broadcasters are covered by the Act only in respect of information held for purposes “other than those of journalism, art or literature” (see Schedule I, Part VI of the Act)¹. We are not therefore obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities. However, on this occasion we’re happy to respond to your request by providing the information given above.

Appeal Rights

The BBC does not offer an internal review when the information requested is not covered by the Act. If you disagree with our decision you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. Contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF telephone 01625 545 700. <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Hallett
Advisor, Information Policy & Compliance

¹ For more information about how the Act applies to the BBC please see www.bbc.co.uk/foi. Please note that this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive legal interpretation of how the Act applies to the BBC.