

How to verify a viral image

Start with provenance, not pixels. A real image can carry a false caption.

BEFORE YOU INVESTIGATE

Save the post URL and a screenshot. Write the exact who / what / where / when claim in one sentence.

- ☐ **1 Freeze the claim**
Write down the exact who, what, where, and when. Save the post URL and a screenshot.
- ☐ **2 Search the whole image**
Use more than one visual search engine. Look for earlier, larger, and differently captioned copies.
- ☐ **3 Search the fragments**
Crop distinctive signs, buildings, uniforms, logos, landmarks, or visible text and search them separately.
- ☐ **4 Trace the earliest credible upload**
Follow credits, usernames, captions, filenames, and linked galleries toward an identifiable source.
- ☐ **5 Inspect the file cautiously**
Treat metadata as a clue, not proof. Platforms strip it, clocks are wrong, and fields can be changed.
- ☐ **6 Test the scene**
Compare weather, shadows, language, roads, buildings, terrain, clothing, and independent event records.
- ☐ **7 Separate the verdicts**
Report what you established about the pixels, place, date, and attached claim as separate conclusions.

A defensible result can be partial

Confirmed place, unknown date. Old pixels, false caption. Unverified is a valid conclusion.