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Prijenos i provjera tvrdnji o američkoj potpori operaciji Oluja u dostupnoj digitalnoj građi

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Sažetak: Rad istražuje kako se u dostupnoj digitalnoj građi oblikuju i prenose tvrdnje o američkoj političkoj, vojnoj i obavještajnoj potpori operaciji Oluja. Ciljano odabrana građa obuhvaća 26 zapisa: američke dokumente i javne izjave iz 1995., sudske transkripte, službenu biografiju te novinske tekstove, prijevode i naknadne prijenose. Kvalitativnom usporedbom provjeravaju se pripisivanje izvora, vremenski odnosi, podudarnosti formulacija i stupanj izvjesnosti. Utvrđeno je nedosljedno vremensko pripisivanje Herrickove uloge u Nacionalovim tekstovima: skupni opis praćenja Oluje nije usklađen s kasnijim navodom o njegovoj zamjeni, a sudski zapis evidentira odlazak prije operacije i ograničeno znanje o provedbi. U nizu Spiegel – Opinio Juris – The Grayzone dio kvalificiranih navoda prenosi se kategoričnije. Pukanićev članak i njegovi engleski prijenosi razlikuju se u nazivu predmeta obavještajne razmjene, a Index snažnije predstavlja dokaznu vrijednost Nacionalova izvora. Usporedbe pokazuju kako ponavljanje navoda, promjena izraza i promjena pripisivanja utječu na predstavljanje američke uloge. Nalazi se odnose na pregledane digitalne inačice i dokumentirane tvrdnje; ne utvrđuju motive autora ni ukupni opseg američkoga sudjelovanja.

Ključne riječi: Operacija Oluja, američka potpora, kritika izvora, provenijencija, digitalna građa

Transmission and Verification of Claims about US Support for Operation Storm in Available Digital Sources

Abstract: This paper examines how claims about US political, military and intelligence support for Operation Storm are formulated and transmitted in available digital sources. The purposively selected corpus comprises 26 records: US documents and public statements from 1995, court transcripts, an official biography, news articles, translations and subsequent reproductions. Qualitative comparison examines source attribution, temporal relationships,

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similarities in wording and degrees of certainty. The analysis identified inconsistencies in how the timing of Herrick's role is presented in Nacional's articles: a collective description of monitoring Operation Storm is not consistent with a later passage reporting his replacement, while the court record documents his departure before the operation and his limited knowledge of its conduct. In the Spiegel–Opinio Juris–The Grayzone sequence, some qualified claims are transmitted more categorically. Pukanić's article and its English reproductions use different terms for the subject matter of the intelligence exchange, while Index presents Nacional's source as having greater evidentiary value. The comparisons show how repetition of claims, changes in wording and shifts in attribution affect the presentation of the US role. The findings concern the digital versions examined and the documented claims; they do not establish the authors' motives or the full extent of US involvement.

Keywords: Operation Storm, US support, source criticism, provenance, digital sources

1 INTRODUCTION

Claims about the US role in Operation Storm appear in different types of records: intelligence assessments, public political statements, witness testimony, journalistic reconstructions and translations. Their simultaneous appearance in online searches can create an impression of corroboration by several sources. However, multiple publications do not necessarily mean multiple independent sources. For historical research, it is crucial to establish who made a particular claim, what they based it on and whether its later form remained faithful to the available basis.

Perković Paloš discusses representations of Operation Storm in works by American and British authors, while Marić examines the information war against Operation Storm and public interpretations of the operation. These works establish the historiographical and information context for verifying individual media claims.[1]

The role of intelligence services had also been discussed before the journalistic reconstructions of the mid-2000s. In an appendix to the NIOD report, *Cees Wiebes* discusses MPRI and US unmanned aerial vehicles on Brač. He attributes the claim about the exchange of collected data to an earlier newspaper source by David Binder. This opens up the possibility of comparison and tracing earlier attributions, but does not provide a substitute for an operational record of a particular exchange.[2] In the appendices to his book Oluja, Davor Marijan includes an extract from Galbraith's testimony in the Milošević case, thus making the court testimony available in a Croatian historiographical publication.[3]

This paper combines the verification of selected claims about US support with a reconstruction of their transmission between publications. It compares attributed sources, dates and wording, as well as the consistency of journalistic claims with court transcripts and declassified documents available online. The research contribution consists in identifying specific points at which the content of a claim, its attributed source or its degree of certainty changes. Particular attention is paid to distinguishing political non-opposition to the military and police operation known as Operation Storm from claims about US planning and monitoring of its conduct.

[1] Perković Paloš, 2015, abstract; Marić, 2014, pp. 211 and 236–238.
[2] Wiebes, 2002, Appendix II, pp. 2666 and 2893, especially note 1531 on p. 2893.
[3] Marijan, 2007, pp. 401–412.

The starting point for the criticism of digital sources is the distinction between the authenticity, reliability and accuracy of records. Duranti links authenticity to a record's identity and integrity, reliability to its ability to represent facts, and accuracy to the correctness of its content.[4] Fickers emphasises the connection between the internal and external criticism of online sources: interpreting them requires information about their author, creation, type, dissemination and purpose.[5]

The paper primarily seeks to contribute to information science by investigating the provenance, credibility and transmission of claims. Historical source criticism provides procedures for verifying authorship, chronology and evidentiary basis, while digital historiography directs attention to the characteristics of versions available online and the conditions of their use. Analysis of media transmission makes it possible to trace changes in wording and source attribution. These approaches are combined to establish how a particular claim is transmitted and what support the available records provide for it.

2 AIM, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim is to establish whether the content, attribution and certainty of claims change during transmission and to what extent the available sources support the claims compared. The research addresses three questions: how do different types of sources describe the US political position, training and operational activities; what similarities and changes appear in linked publications; and to what extent are journalistic claims consistent with the court transcripts and declassified documents examined?

Two hypotheses are proposed. H1: In some publications with documented links, claims are presented with a greater degree of certainty, without an additional evidentiary basis being cited. H2: Some later publications repeat earlier claims without citing a new and independent basis. The hypotheses are examined through a qualitative comparison of selected passages.

[4] Duranti, 2009, p. 52.
[5] Fickers, 2012, section 8, „The Hermeneutic Prerequisite of Online Source Criticism".

3 SOURCES AND METHOD

The analytical corpus consists of 26 publicly available records created or published between 1995 and 2025; the publication date of the official biography has not been established. It comprises two declassified US assessments, two US releases, five court transcripts, one official biography and sixteen media articles, translations or reproductions. Their distribution is shown in Table 1. The literature is used to define the research problem and context and is not included in the empirical corpus.

Table 1. Overview of the 26 records analysed

ID	Date	Record and publisher	Role in verification
K02	21 July 1995	*DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force*: assessment of the conflict in Croatia	contemporaneous assessment of military intentions and possible outcomes
K01	31 July 1995	Schindler: memorandum for the meeting on 1 August	assessment of the imminence of an attack and differences between US agencies
U01	4 August 1995	Clinton: response to a question about Croatia	public presentation of the US political position
U2	8 August 1995	McCurry: press briefing	diplomatic contacts and warnings about the spread of the conflict
T01	26 June 2003	ICTY, Milošević: Galbraith's testimony	statements about US assistance and MPRI's contract
T02	25 April 2006	ICTY, Martić: Galbraith's testimony	political non-opposition and circumstances relating to Bihać
T04	23 June 2008	ICTY, Gotovina et al.: Galbraith's testimony	peaceful resolution and conditions for the protection of civilians
T03	24 June 2008	ICTY, Gotovina et al.: continuation of Galbraith's testimony	non-opposition, conditions and MPRI's private contract
T07	9 July 2009	ICTY, Gotovina et al.: Herrick's testimony	statement D1578, departure from Croatia and limits of knowledge
S01	Undated	U. S. Army: official biography of Ivan Sarac	verification of biographical details, unit designation and recognition
P1	24 May 2005	Pukanić, Nacional: article about Clinton and Operation Storm	Croatian basis for comparing the message and intelligence exchange

ID	Date	Record and publisher	Role in verification
P2	5 June 2005	*Cryptome: US Role in Storm*	English copy with an attributed Nacional source text
P3	4 March 2006	*Google Groups*: reproduction of Pukanić's text	English reproduction citing *OpenSubscriber* and *Cryptome*
P4	24 May 2005	*Index*: article about indictments relating to Operation Storm	summary of Nacional and presentation of evidentiary value
R1	2 March 2006	*Google Groups*: Harris's English text	basis for comparing expressions concerning the type of support
R2	9 March 2006 UTC	*Google Groups*: Croatian translation of Harris	reproduction of the translation; cites Slobodna Dalmacija of 8 March
A1	13 January 2006 UTC	*Google Groups*: AKI news report	reproduction of a news report of 12 January about Globus and Tenet
A2	12 January 2006	Azinović, RSE: ZAGREB	comparison of attribution and the description of Tenet's position
N1	2 October 2007	Šoštarić, Nacional: interview with Perry	distinguishing indirect assistance from the participation of military units
N2	29 January 2008	Šoštarić, Nacional: announcement of Šarac's testimony	journalistic claims about individuals, preparations for and monitoring of Operation Storm
N3	10 February 2009	Šoštarić, Nacional: announcement of US witnesses	repeated operational descriptions and announcement of court testimony
N4	23 June 2008	Tomljanović, Nacional: report on Galbraith	distinguishing earlier testimony from the date of the newspaper publication
N5	16 January 2006	Pukanić, Nacional: the cost of the generals' defence	claims about the CIA and Tenet in the context of the defence
E01	23 January 2006	DER SPIEGEL: article about US links	journalistic claims with explicit markers of uncertainty
J01	21 February 2006	Heller, Opinio Juris: commentary on *Spiegel*'s article	link to the earlier record and quoted passages

ID	Date	Record and publisher	Role in verification
G1	4 August 2025	Klarenberg, *The Grayzone*: article about the US role	more categorical reproduction with a link to Opinio Juris

Source: the author's register of the sources examined. Titles have been shortened for clarity; full bibliographic details are provided in the list of sources. For P3, R1, R2 and A1, the date of reproduction is given in UTC.

The sources were purposively selected on the basis of the content of the claims and the possibility of comparing them. The starting point was media articles about the US role in Operation Storm. Following their links and attributions identified related texts, translations and republications, while court transcripts, declassified documents, public statements and official biographical details were sought to verify individual claims. Searches covered the online collections of Nacional, *Index* and Radio Slobodna Europa, *Google Groups*, the digital collection of the Bill Clinton Presidential Library, public transcripts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the international portals listed in Table 1. The review was concluded on 5 October 2026.

A record was included when text suitable for comparison was available and when its role in the transmission or verification of a particular claim could be determined. Media articles, translations and republications make it possible to trace changes in content and attribution, while documents, statements, transcripts and the biographical record provide a comparative basis for verifying individual claims. The reason for inclusion is therefore the analytical connection between a record and the claims under investigation, rather than its representativeness of a particular outlet or period. The resulting corpus of 26 records allows documented cases to be analysed, but does not constitute a comprehensive list of publications on the subject or a basis for estimating the frequency of the phenomena identified in reporting on Operation Storm as a whole.

The dates of messages on *Google Groups* are recorded according to their stored UTC timestamps because the displayed date changes with the time zone. The date of the news report or source text cited in a message is recorded separately.

The unit of analysis is a claim in a particular passage, together with its attribution and context. For each record, the title, displayed date, author or sender where identifiable, publication type, link and location of the comparison are recorded. The original pagination and line numbers

are used for court transcripts. When verifying an answer, the question to which it responds is also included; a witness's statement is distinguished from counsel's question, a summary read out in court and a decision admitting an exhibit.

The comparison involves four procedures. First, it establishes whether a text describes an observation, another person's testimony, a claim from another media outlet or the author's conclusion. It then distinguishes the date of the event, the date of testimony and the date of publication. The third procedure compares passages with corresponding content, including translations and markers of certainty. The fourth verifies an individual media claim against an available direct record. Table 3 summarises fifteen points of comparison and the types of findings; each point is explained in the results.

An increase in certainty denotes the removal of expressions that present a claim as something reported, or its presentation as confirmed or proven information. A new evidentiary basis is understood to mean an additional identified document, testimony from a named individual or direct observation with which a later text supports the same claim. Republication and authorial commentary do not in themselves meet this criterion.

A direct link between publications is established when a later text cites or links to an earlier record. Textual correspondence without such a reference and shared reliance on a third source are recorded separately. A direction of transmission is assigned only to a documented relationship.

Comparisons of media articles concern the identified online versions listed in Table 1. Declassified documents and court transcripts available digitally are used to verify individual claims. Online texts have not been compared with printed copies or their facsimiles. Author, translator and sender are distinguished according to the information in each publication. The accompanying supplement provides a register of records, links, locators and short original expressions, together with SHA-256 checksums of the stored files. The register identifies the records used and the points of comparison. The authors' intentions have not been investigated separately.

4 RESULTS

4.1 US ASSESSMENTS AND POLITICAL POSITION

The title of the assessment of 21 July 1995 (K02) forecasts a likely major conflict in the autumn, but the first page allows for the possibility that developments around Bihać and Posavina or provocations by the Serb rebel side in Croatia could prompt military action by the Republic of Croatia during the summer. It considers Croatian military intentions, a possible advance towards Knin and the risks of a response by the armed forces of the so-called Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK), the Army of Republika Srpska and the Yugoslav Army. Pages 8 and 9 discuss the limited scope of international pressure on the Croatian leadership, referring to the economic instruments of influence available to the European Union and its member states and to the German government's warnings to Zagreb. It separately assesses the conditions for a possible collapse of RSK forces.[6]

The memorandum of 31 July (K01), prepared for a meeting the following day, distinguishes the *State Department*'s acceptance of assurances from the Croatian authorities concerning a limited military operation to assist Bihać from other agencies' assessment of a broader attack. It links the possible success or failure of the Croatian military operation to subsequent cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[7] A comparison of K02 and K01 shows a change in the assessment of the imminence of an attack over ten days. Both documents record US assessments of Croatian plans.

On 4 August, in response to a question about Croatia, Clinton linked Croatian action to relieving pressure on Bihać and urged caution about the spread of the war (U01).[8] On 8 August, McCurry described diplomatic contacts and warnings to the parties involved (U2).[9] These statements document the public presentation of US policy at the time of the operation.

Galbraith's answers in court define the expression political non-opposition more precisely. In the Martić case in 2006, he distinguished giving a green or red light from a situation in which

[6] *DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force*, C05960734, 21 July 1995, pp. 1–2 and 8–9.
[7] Schindler, C05956104, 31 July 1995, p. 1 and pp. 2–3, section 3.
[8] Clinton, 1995, final answer concerning Croatia and Bihać. https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1995/08/1995-08-04-remarks-by-president-on-political-reform.html (accessed 5 October 2026).
[9] McCurry, 1995, answers concerning Croatia and warnings about the spread of the war. https://clintonwhitehouse6.archives.gov/1995/08/1995-08-08-press-briefing-by-mike-mccurry.html (accessed 5 October 2026).

he could not demand that the Croatian side desist, given the danger to Bihać (T02).[10] On 23 June 2008, he described US support for a peaceful resolution and conditions for the protection of civilians, stating that US statements should not have been interpreted as a green light (T04).[11] The following day, he also testified that the Croats had understood US non-opposition and that the US side wanted them to understand that there would be no sanctions if they observed the stated conditions (T03).[12]

Galbraith's answers distinguish explicit approval of the operation from non-opposition subject to the stated conditions. The comparison also encompasses the Croatian understanding of the US position. This testimony therefore provides a basis for determining the political relationship, while a claim about planning or directing the operation requires evidence of that specific activity.

4.2 MPRI: PRIVATE CONTRACT, TRAINING AND THE CLAIM OF PLANNING

In his testimony in the Milošević case in 2003, Galbraith said that, to his knowledge, the US had not assisted the Croatian Army in the operation or given it instructions on its military aspects. Regarding MPRI, he described a contract covering human rights, budgeting and leadership and stated that he was unaware of involvement in planning Operation Storm (T01).[13]

In the transcript of 24 June 2008, MPRI is described as a private company operating under a private contract with *State Department* approval. The training is linked to human rights and areas outside combat training.[14] In an interview in 2007 (N1), Perry distinguished indirect and moral assistance from the participation of US soldiers or military units and mentioned the permitted assistance of a private company in organising the Croatian Army.[15]

The accounts compared describe the contract, approval and content of the training. They do not equate these activities with drawing up a plan for Operation Storm. Perry's distinction

[10] MKSJ, 2006, Martić, 25 April, p. 3783, lines 3–16.
[11] MKSJ, 2008a, Gotovina i drugi, 23 June, p. 4928, lines 3–22.
[12] MKSJ, 2008b, Gotovina i drugi, 24 June, pp. 5004–5005; p. 5038, lines 9–18 and p. 5039, lines 2–11.
[13] MKSJ, 2003, Milošević, 26 June, p. 23168, lines 20–24; p. 23169, lines 9–21; p. 23173, lines 1–20.
[14] MKSJ, 2008b, Gotovina i drugi, 24 June, p. 5036, lines 18–25; p. 5037, lines 1–4; p. 5038, lines 1–6.
[15] Šoštarić, 2007, first question and William Perry's answer concerning US assistance. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/38432/hrvatska-je-zasluzna-za-mir-na-balkanu (accessed 5 October 2026).

between private assistance and the participation of US military units also leaves the question of intelligence exchange separate.

4.3 NACIONAL'S CLAIMS AND HERRICK'S TESTIMONY

Šoštarić's article of January 2008 (N2) combines an announcement of Šarac's testimony with an extensive description of US–Croatian intelligence cooperation. It links Šarac to all the preparations for Operation Storm, and Herrick and Šarac to monitoring Operations Flash and Storm from the General Staff. A later passage also states that John Sadler replaced Herrick a day or two before Operation Storm. The published text thus already requires a distinction between individuals and periods of service within the article itself.[16]

In February 2009 (N3), an announcement of testimony by Sadler, Herrick and Šarac is linked to almost identical descriptions of Šarac's involvement, monitoring from the General Staff and the transmission of the operation to the Pentagon. The introduction states that each would testify from his respective position at the time. Later, the text mentions Herrick's replacement before the operation began and the arrival of 'trojice Amerikanaca' ('three Americans') in the war room at midnight on 4 August, without naming them individually in that passage. Similarities between the two articles encompass named individuals and specific operational descriptions. A new announcement of proceedings does not in itself constitute new independent corroboration of the repeated claim.[17]

The official US Army biography (S01) records Šarac's intelligence career, service in embassies and induction into the *Hall of Fame* in 2007. There is a verifiable difference in the designation of his former unit: Nacional gives the 518th Military Intelligence Battalion, while the biography gives the 519th.[18] The biography does not describe Šarac's role in preparations for Operation Storm or the transmission of the operation to the Pentagon, so those parts of the journalistic claim remain outside the scope of this biographical verification.

[16] Šoštarić, 2008, passages concerning monitoring from the General Staff and Herrick's replacement. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/42223/obavjestajac-sad-a-kljucni-haaski-svjedok (accessed 5 October 2026).
[17] Šoštarić, 2009, passages concerning the announced witnesses, monitoring and Herrick's replacement. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/53159/americki-casnici-ce-braniti-gotovinu (accessed 5 October 2026).
[18] U.S. Army Military Intelligence Hall of Fame, undated, pp. 1–2. https://www.ikn.army.mil/apps/MIHOF/biographies/Sarac,%20Ivan.pdf (accessed 5 October 2026).

For Herrick, comparative sources are directly available. The public transcript of 9 July 2009 (T07) records the admission of his statement as exhibit D1578. The summary read out in court states that he left Croatia on 2 August 1995, and this date reappears in a question during examination-in-chief. The summary also describes a conversation before the operation with Markica Rebić, then Assistant Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia for Security, about the possible reaction of the international community, and general prior awareness of the forthcoming action.[19]

This conversation can be compared with Pukanić's description of 2005 (P1), in which Herrick's message to Rebić is presented as Clinton's green light for the operation.[20] The emphasis on speed corresponds: Nacional uses the expression 'čista i brza' ('clean and quick'), while the court summary explicitly mentions the protection of civilians. The summary does not attribute the message to the president and includes Herrick's qualification that he cannot speak on behalf of the international community. The conversation and the emphasis on speed have a comparative basis, while the attribution of the message to the US president is not confirmed by that summary.

In his oral answer, Herrick explains that Gojko Šušak, then Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, had informed him of the planning of an offensive action, and he describes the standard military logic of such planning. During cross-examination, he confirms that he has no information about the actual conduct of the operation, that he had not seen the list of artillery targets and that he has no information about the specific weapons used against particular targets.[21] A discussion of the plan before his departure should therefore be distinguished from participation in monitoring its conduct after his departure.

The finding concerns a temporal inconsistency within Nacional's articles. A collective passage links Herrick and Šarac to the continuous monitoring of Operations Flash and Storm, while a later passage in the same article mentions Herrick's replacement before Operation

[19] MKSJ, 2009, Gotovina i drugi, 9 July, pp. 20041–20042, admission of statement D1578; p. 20043, lines 17–23; p. 20045, lines 16–25; p. 20074, lines 15–24. For Markica Rebić's position at the time, see: Ministarstvo obrane Republike Hrvatske, Uprava vojne policije, „Report on the Employment of RH Armed Forces Military Police Units in Storm", 11 August 1995, English translation, in: *Additional Pleading of the Republic of Croatia, Annexes, Volume 2*, 30 August 2012, Annex 30, p. 113. https://icj-web.leman.un-icc.cloud/sites/default/files/case-related/118/18216.pdf (accessed 21 October 2026).

[20] Pukanić, 2005, opening passages concerning Herrick's visit to Rebić and the attribution of the message to Clinton. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/18573/odusevljen-bljeskom-clinton-inicirao-oluju (accessed 5 October 2026).

[21] MKSJ, 2009, Gotovina i drugi, 9 July, p. 20075, lines 1–24; p. 20077, lines 7–21.

Storm. The court record of his departure on 2 August and Herrick's answer about the limits of his knowledge support a distinction between his prior awareness and monitoring the operation's conduct. The reference to 'trojici Amerikanaca' ('three Americans') in N3 does not name the participants, so it cannot independently establish that Herrick was present at that time. The inconsistency is therefore established in relation to collective attribution in a particular passage, rather than every claim or all the individuals described in the article.

Nacional's report on Galbraith of 23 June 2008 (N4) explicitly includes earlier testimony in the Milošević and Martić cases.[22] Distinguishing the date of publication from the date of each testimony shows that some of the quoted content concerns testimony already on record.

4.4 TRANSLATIONS, SUMMARIES AND THE ATTRIBUTION OF EVIDENTIARY VALUE

Pukanić's article of 24 May 2005 (P1) describes US involvement and refers to Rebić's written report, which is supposed to corroborate the message conveyed. In the passage on the exchange, it mentions encryption devices, and in the passage on interception, the designation NSE.[23] The English text on *Cryptome*, published on 5 June under the title *US Role in Storm* (P2), gives *encryption codes* at the corresponding point, followed by NSA. The heading attributes the text to Pukanić and Nacional and thanks Profaca, but does not identify the translator.[24]

A message sent to CRO NEWS on 4 March 2006 (P3) reproduces the English text with the same differences and includes references to *OpenSubscriber* and *Cryptome*.[25] The versions compared differ in the subject matter of the exchange, namely devices and codes, and in the designations NSE and NSA. The available information about transmission does not allow these changes to be attributed to a particular translator.

[22] Tomljanović, 2008, passages concerning the testimony of 2003 and 2006. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/46730/na-sudenju-gotovina-cermak-markac-svjedocio-peter-galbraith (accessed 5 October 2026).
[23] Pukanić, 2005, passages concerning the exchange of equipment, the designation NSE and Rebić's report. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/18573/odusevljen-bljeskom-clinton-inicirao-oluju (accessed 5 October 2026).
[24] Pukanić, 2005, heading and passages concerning *encryption codes* and NSA. https://cryptome.wikileaks.org/us-op-storm.htm (accessed 5 October 2026).
[25] Pukanić, reproduction, 2006, heading *source*, cited links and passages concerning *codes* and NSA. https://groups.google.com/g/cro-news/c/fOOP9l-cZt0 (accessed 5 October 2026).

The *Index* article published on the same day as Pukanić's article (P4) summarises Nacional and uses the expression 'koji dokazuju' ('which prove') in its opening sentence for documents concerning the US involvement described.[26] It refers to published documents, while Nacional mentions a written communication about Herrick's visit and testimony in the archives, without displaying the communication. The *Index* publication likewise neither displays the document itself nor provides a separate account of its verification. Evidentiary value is thus presented more strongly than the verifiable basis made available to the reader by the publications compared. The documentary relationships between the four records in this case are shown in Figure 1.

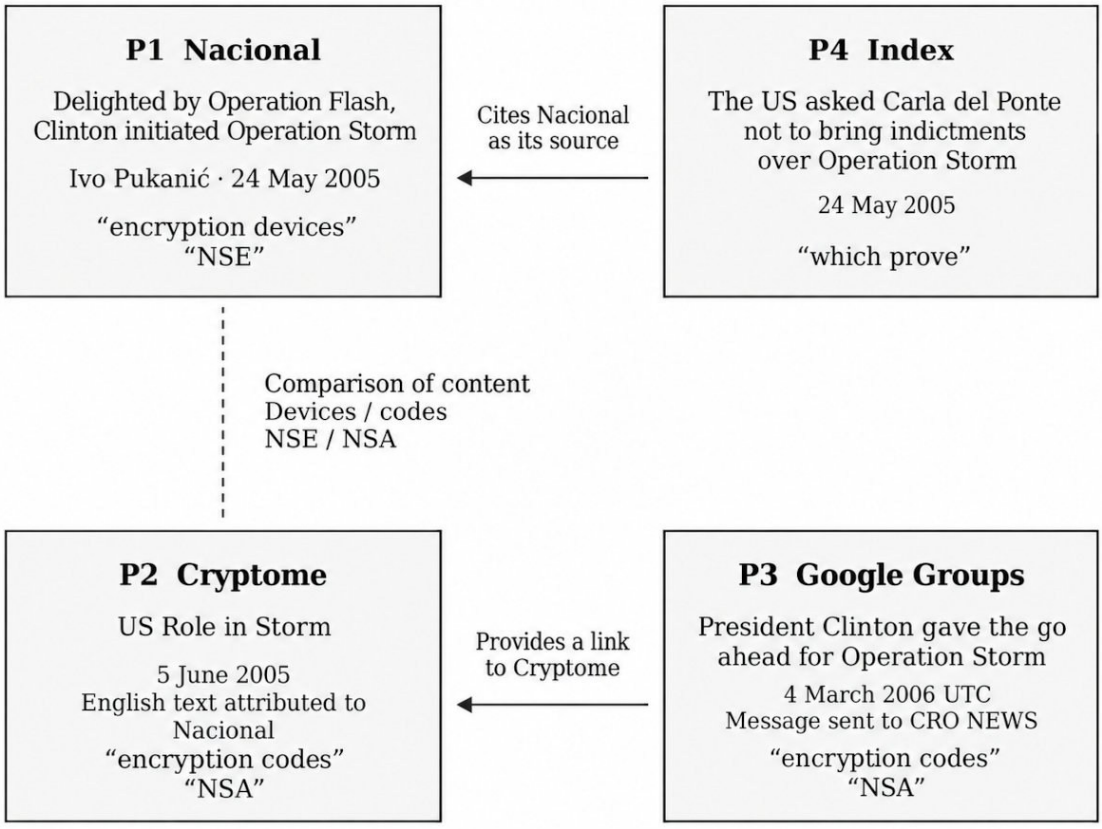

Figure 1. Documentary relationships between records linked to Pukanić's article about Operation Storm

Note: Arrows indicate explicit reference to a source or a link; the dashed line without an arrow connects the versions compared. Croatian quotations are translated into English. The diagram does not assume direct copying in any particular direction. Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of records P1–P4.

[26] Index.hr, 2005, opening sentence and attribution to Nacional. https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/sad-trazile-od-carle-del-ponte-da-ne-dize-optuznice-za-oluju/266934.aspx (accessed 5 October 2026).

Harris's English text in a message of March 2006 (R1) refers in one passage to *intelligence and technical support*.[27] The Croatian translation attributed to Joško Čelan and reproduced by Profaca (R2) gives 'podatke i potporu' ('data and support') at the corresponding point. However, a later passage in the same Croatian version retains the reference to real-time intelligence.[28] A local change in the specificity of the expression is confirmed, rather than the removal of the intelligence component from the entire text.

The AKI news report dated 12 January 2006 and reproduced on *Google Groups* (A1), and Azinović's article of the same date on Radio Slobodna Europa (A2), both refer to Globus. AKI cites the defence team and describes Tenet as someone who later became head of the CIA; RSE cites sources close to the legal team and identifies Tenet as head of the CIA without the same temporal qualification.[29] The differences concern attribution and the temporal description of his position. The publications examined do not document direct borrowing from one another.

Pukanić's article about defence costs, with a displayed date of 16 January 2006 (N5), also links the context of the defence to claims about the CIA and Tenet.[30] It documents the appearance of a similar claim in another publication, without an additional basis being presented for independent corroboration.

Selected formulations and the corresponding points of comparison are shown in Table 2.

[27] Harris, 2006, passages concerning *intelligence and technical support* and the subsequent use of intelligence data. https://groups.google.com/g/cro-news/c/CNanNAmyeX4 (accessed 5 October 2026).
[28] Harris, Croatian translation, 2006, passages concerning data and support and real-time intelligence. https://groups.google.com/g/cro-news/c/Ceg7yQpEvDk (accessed 5 October 2026).
[29] AKI, reproduction, 2006, passages referring to Globus, the defence and Tenet's position. https://groups.google.com/g/cro-news/c/DJ-5ZCrOMDc (accessed 5 October 2026). Azinović, 2006, opening passage concerning sources close to the legal team. https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/656135.html (accessed 5 October 2026).
[30] Pukanić, 2006, passage concerning the CIA and George Tenet. https://arhiva.nacional.hr/clanak/22613/obrana-po-generalu-stoji-3-milijuna-eura (accessed 5 October 2026).

Table 2. Selected formulations in directly compared records

Records	First point of comparison	Second point of comparison	Finding
P1 / P2 – P3	„kripto zaštitne uređaje”	„encryption codes”	The term for the subject matter of the exchange has changed.
P1 / P2 – P3	„NSE-ijem”	„NSA”	The institutional designations are inconsistent.
P1/P4	„svjedočanstvo u arhivima”	„koji dokazuju”	The summary presents the evidentiary basis more strongly.
R1/R2	„intelligence and technical support”	„podatke i potporu”	The specificity of the type of support is locally reduced.
R1/R2	„real time intelligence”	„obavještajnim podatcima u stvarnome vremenu”	A later passage retains the intelligence component.
A1/A2	Information from Globus relating to the defence	Globus’s sources close to the defence legal team	Source attribution differs.
A1/A2	Tenet later becomes head of the CIA	Tenet is identified as head of the CIA	The temporal description of the position differs.
N2/S01	518th Military Intelligence Battalion	519th Military Intelligence Battalion	The designation of the former unit is inconsistent.

Source: the author’s comparison of P1–P4, R1–R2, A1–A2, N2 and S01; the corresponding locators are given in the footnotes to Chapter 4. Quotation marks identify selected original expressions; the other points are summarised in Croatian in the original.

4.5 SPIEGEL–OPINIO JURIS–THE GRAYZONE: LOSS OF MARKERS OF UNCERTAINTY

Spiegel’s article of 23 January 2006 (E01) has a question as its title. It refers to Globus and describes the US role using a series of qualifications: training at *Fort Irwin*, the Pentagon’s participation in planning, MPRI, Tenet’s meeting, aircraft operations and the exchange of satellite data are presented with the expressions ‘allegedly’, ‘purportedly’ and ‘is said to’, which mark a claim or unconfirmed information. It describes Tenet as the then deputy head of

the CIA. Comparison with AKI and RSE shows three different ways of specifying the timing of his position.[31] Qualifications attached to operational claims are part of the content of reporting; removing them changes the author's relationship to the claim.

Heller's post on Opinio Juris of 21 February 2006 (J01) links to *Spiegel*'s article and quotes passages from it while retaining the markers of uncertainty. Authorial commentary follows the selected quotations.[32] The transmission of a newspaper report with its source clearly identified is documented.

Klarenberg's post on *The Grayzone* of August 2025 (G1) uses the expression 'Spiegel confirmed' in the passage about *Spiegel*, while the accompanying link leads to Heller's post. The same passage retains the attribution of the claims to Croatian military sources. In the following quoted passages, training, the Pentagon's participation in planning, Tenet's meeting, aircraft operations and the exchange of data are reproduced without the earlier markers of uncertainty. A change is thus established in the way confirmation is presented and in the operational passages compared, while attribution is retained in the introduction to that part of the article. No additional evidentiary basis for the more categorical wording is presented in those passages.[33]

The texts compared also differ in their concluding argument. Pukanić's article and the versions of Harris's text use US involvement in arguing against an interpretation of Operation Storm as criminal and against the treatment of Gotovina. *The Grayzone* incorporates similar claims into an accusatory portrayal of the US role. The same motif of US participation thus serves different interpretations of the operation.

Table 3. Summary of the 15 points of comparison

Identifier and sources	Subject of comparison	Type of finding
C01: P1/P2/P3	devices in the Croatian text and codes in the English reproductions	textual difference
C02: P1/P2/P3	different designations NSE and NSA	inconsistency in designations

[31] DER SPIEGEL, 2006, passages concerning *Fort Irwin*, MPRI, Tenet, the aircraft and satellite data. https://www.spiegel.de/international/ante-gotovina-us-links-to-croatian-war-crime-a-396828.html (accessed 5 October 2026).
[32] Heller, 2006, link to *Spiegel* and blocks of quoted text. https://opiniojuris.org/2006/02/21/us-involvement-in-croatian-war-crimes/ (accessed 5 October 2026).
[33] Klarenberg, 2025, passage containing *Spiegel confirmed*, its link and the following operational claims. https://thegrayzone.com/2025/08/04/us-ethnic-cleansing-serbs-croat/ (accessed 5 October 2026).

Identifier and sources	Subject of comparison	Type of finding
C03: P1/P4	*Index*'s presentation of evidentiary value	increase in certainty
C04: R1/R2	specificity of support in one sentence and a later passage	local change with the broader context preserved
C05: A1/A2	attribution to the defence or to sources close to the defence	different attribution
C06: A1/A2/E01	temporal description of Tenet's position	difference in wording
C07: K02/K01	assessments of the imminence of a Croatian attack	change in assessment over time
C08: U01/U2/T02/T03/T04	public statements and later testimony about the political position	distinguishing actions and circumstances
C09: T01/T03/N1	MPRI's contract, training and planning	distinguishing types of assistance
C10: N2/S01	biographical details, unit designation and operational role	limited biographical verification
C11: N2/N3	corresponding operational descriptions	restatement of claims
C12: N2/N3/N4/T01/T02	announcement, testimony given and date of publication	distinguishing temporal levels
C13: E01/J01/G1	transmission of qualified claims	loss of qualifications and reference through an intermediary
C14: P1/R1/R2/G1	concluding direction of the argument	different interpretative frameworks
C15: P1/N2/N3/T07	Herrick's message, departure and knowledge of the operation's conduct	corresponding basis of the conversation and inconsistent temporal attribution of the role

Source: the author's comparison of the sources cited in Chapter 4. The points of comparison are not mutually independent accounts of events.

5 DISCUSSION

The comparison shows that journalistic reconstructions connect claims with different evidentiary scope. Assessments K01 and K02 document US knowledge and expectations before the operation. Galbraith's testimony defines political non-opposition and the conditions attached to it, while testimony about MPRI describes a private contract and training. Claims about particular individuals' participation in planning or monitoring Operation Storm require separate verification of the time, place and activities.

Herrick's case demonstrates the value of linking an article's internal consistency to the court record. The journalistic description and the summary of the statement read out in court correspond in relation to the conversation with Rebić and the emphasis on the speed of the action, but present the origin of the message differently. The collective description of monitoring Operation Storm is not consistent with the later reference to Herrick's replacement within the article itself; the transcript specifies his departure on 2 August and limited knowledge of the operation's conduct. This finding concerns a named individual and specific passages.

The inconsistencies identified do not carry equal evidentiary weight. Differences between the designations NSE and NSA and between the expressions 'kriptozaštitni uređaji' and 'encryption codes' directly document a change in the text. They do not in themselves establish which designation is correct or what was actually exchanged. Expressions presenting a claim as proven and the omission of earlier qualifications change its apparent degree of certainty, but do not provide additional corroboration of its content. Herrick's case has a more direct bearing on the assessment of a particular historical claim because the available chronology makes it possible to verify the attribution of his presence and activities during the operation. The evidentiary scope of this finding remains limited to his role and the passages compared; it cannot be extended to all claims about US intelligence cooperation or the participation of other individuals.

Two comparisons support H1. Index presents the evidentiary value of the documentary basis cited by Nacional more strongly, while The Grayzone omits earlier markers of uncertainty in selected operational claims. In both cases, more categorical wording is introduced without an additional basis being presented at the point compared. The Croatian translation of Harris's text shows a different type of change: one formulation is less specific, while a later passage

retains the intelligence content. The findings therefore do not indicate a single pattern across all reproductions.

H2 is supported by corresponding operational passages in Nacional's articles of 2008 and 2009 and Heller's explicitly attributed quotations from Spiegel. A new announcement of proceedings or authorial commentary is added to an earlier claim, but no additional independent source is cited alongside the repeated claim. When using such publications for historical research, it is necessary to retain information about the shared basis of their content.

The contribution to information science arises from combining the verification of an individual claim with a reconstruction of the relationships between the records transmitting it. The comparisons show why the origin of a claim, chronology, changes in wording and the available evidentiary basis need to be considered together when assessing credibility. This makes it possible to distinguish new evidence from republications and textual changes from inconsistencies relevant to assessing the event itself. The same method of verification can be applied to other corpora of digital sources in which claims are transmitted between media outlets, languages and periods. Such application requires a separate selection of sources and verification of each case.

6 CONCLUSION

Changes in content and the degree of certainty with which claims are presented, repetition of operational descriptions and a temporal inconsistency in the attribution of Herrick's role were identified in the digital sources examined. The court transcript made it possible to specify his departure and knowledge of the conduct of Operation Storm more precisely. In the *Spiegel–Opinio Juris–The Grayzone* sequence, the operational passages compared were reproduced more categorically, with a link to intermediary commentary. *Index* presents the evidentiary value of Nacional's source more strongly, while comparison of Pukanić's Croatian text with its English reproductions shows a change in the term for the subject matter of the exchange.

The findings support both hypotheses in the selected comparisons. Historical assessment of the US role nevertheless requires separate verification of political non-opposition, private training, intelligence exchange and operational participation. The paper's contribution to information science consists in documenting changes in the content, attribution and certainty of claims and distinguishing their repetition from independent corroboration. The different concluding arguments of the texts analysed show that claims about US involvement are used in different interpretations of Operation Storm.

The purposively selected corpus of 26 records is not representative of all reporting on the US role in Operation Storm. The findings concern the claims analysed and their documented relationships and do not allow the frequency of the phenomena identified outside the corpus to be estimated. Comparisons of media articles are limited to identified online versions; no comparison with original printed copies or their facsimiles has been conducted. The differences identified therefore cannot automatically be attributed to the original printed publications or to a particular participant in transmission.

The available sources allow individual claims to be verified, but do not establish the full extent of US involvement. The absence of corroboration in the records examined does not prove that a particular activity did not take place. The changes in wording and attribution identified also do not in themselves demonstrate deliberate manipulation or a shared agenda among the authors, whose motives have not been investigated separately.

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