1100 words. 10 minutes 110 words per minute. Plan for 102 wpm.

3 initial rehearsals with Finola. 70 minutes total.

3 hours learning the script.

Printed script

**Slide 14 –**

Propaganda is as old as the hills. But truth feels more contested than ever.

Thinkers such as Foucault and Derrida argued that objective knowledge is unattainable.

Some of the public now views facts as open to interpretation, not fixed.

Skepticism is amplified by social media, where falsehoods spread faster than corrections.

Trust in institutions and journalism has declined.

Doubt often outpaces trust, as citizens lack clear information to judge rationally.

Russia and China leverage this hybrid “grey zone”, using disinformation

For the Defence Forces’ strategic communicators, this poses a challenge. How can you build credibility when facts feel fluid?

The Defence Forces sit between operational secrecy, ethical duty, and public trust.

Bachmann et al. argue that disinformation rivals kinetic war

Lemmon highlights how it's weaponised in elections

But Bennett and Livingston caution that its impact is often overstated compared to institutional decline.

**Slide 15 –**

The dilemma pits disclosure against silence.

Gunneriusson argues that too much secrecy fosters distrust, while Bachmann & Paphiti feel that too much openness risks exploitation

Wilson notes that corporate-speak corrodes trust.

Nagl and Wilson suggest that organisational culture prevails, which echoes Darczewska who highlights how disinformation thrives on opacity.

**Slide 16 – Persuasion vs Propaganda (s)**

Democracies persuade. However, Lemmon warns of 'propaganda creep', where once spin is detected, future messages are tainted.

Bradshaw and Howard highlight the use of large data sets or “computational propaganda” which are tools to target specific audiences.

A Russian troll called “Jenna Abrams” gained 70k followers by faking authenticity better than institutions. For Defence Forces’ leaders, this is a wake up call.

Bureaucratic or evasive talk loses the narrative to adversaries.

If the Defence Forces uses data-driven persuasion, does it risk mirroring authoritarian tactics. Does that cross an ethical boundary?

The challenge is to out-perform trolls at authenticity while staying true to Ireland’s values.

**Slide 17 – Consider This: UNIFIL Tunnels & IRISHBATT (45s)**

Claims that UNIFIL is a Hezbollah proxy are hard to refute.

but the key is to explain the limited mandate.

Kragh, Åsberg and Darczewska show that disinformation campaigns succeed where trust in institutions is already weak,

Hence credibility, is the decisive factor – not denial.

we concur with Bennett and Livingston who would underline that institutional weakness is the key vulnerability rather than disinformation.

As Finola will show

For DF strategic communicators, it’s important to realise that you speak to a public which largely trusts what you say

Huhtinen et al. caution that reflexive control in social media can backfire

Reconsidering the possible use of computational propaganda, it likely contrasts existing DF ethical boundaries.

**Slide 18 – New Vulnerabilities: Speed & Authenticity**

Zannettou, Pennycook and Rand described how false stories spread faster than corrections driven by inattentive sharing.

As the Jenna Abrams case elucidated, polarisation and mistrust, not just disinformation, shapes the impact.

Credibility hinges on fast, factual, plain-spoken communication – as illustrated by General Mulcahy prevoiusly

This is beyond the simple fact-checking espoused by Ireton & Posetti.

**HANDOVER TO FINOLA**

# SECTION 4

**Slide 26 – Building Resilience and Leadership Strategies (40s)**

For communicators, candour, authenticity and empathy are regular features of the literature.

However, there is debate between the speed of reply and taking time for verification. – Recall the Dublin Riots.

For organisations, credibility is best sustained where organisational learning is clearly apparent.

Nagl argued that for organisations, the leader’s role is to gather a consensus for change and then ensure it happens.

Bennett and Livingston remind us that resilience is not just about communication, but repairing institutions so the public believe in them again.

We ask you.. Can strategic communication to an external audience be successful, if the leader can’t convince their internal audience first.

For the Defence Forces, it could imply the use of mission command in strategic communication.

Krulak’s idea of the strategic corporal could translate to the strategic communications corporal.

However as Gill notes, the “say-do-gap” is detrimental, particularly with alienated followers.

**Slide 27 – Consider This – Maintaining Personal Resilience in Crisis**

We’ll now build on Finola’s analysis regarding notable crises

With the women of honour, General Clancy’s candid admission. That members felt 'ashamed and betrayed' showed authenticity, as Gill advocates.

But candour risks alienating those craving loyalty or nuance.

Particularly alienated followers

Lemmon’s warning of 'propaganda creep' looms:

Ireton and Posetti stress plain-spoken, fact-based clarity for credibility.

Critically, rapid honesty isn’t always enough.

For It can oversimplify complex issues.

For DF leaders, the answer is disciplined candour: Speak plainly, own mistakes swiftly, but pair with visible action to fix institutional flaws.

Resilience means leading with integrity, driving cultural change, and embedding lessons into doctrine.

What followed from the IRG report for example, was a clear and consistent effort to repair the institution and to achieve resilience internally and externally.

For this they should be commended

**Slide 28 – Whole of Society Partnerships (30s)**

This year’s NATO homemade explosives workshop illustrates how secrecy, even when operationally justified, can create vulnerabilities in the information environment.

It triggered conspiracies after a UK attaché’s X post fuelled claims of eroded neutrality.

When events are concealed from media, information gaps are filled by speculation and disinformation. This echoes Kragh & Åsberg’s findings on Russian exploitation of narrative voids.

Critically, DF’s secrecy, perhaps due driven by distrust of biased journalists and operational needs, backfired. It opened the door to ‘Jenna Abrams’-style actors.

UNESCO’s approach to countering disinformation relies on good journalism. However it fails without access.

Concerns regarding discretion are legitimate.

Yet they can be mitigated: We suggest

Accredit a small pool of trusted journalists

issue plain-spoken statements framing the event as neutral

invite independent experts or respected commentators to contextualise.

Without these steps, the media’s absence ensures adversaries control the narrative, undermining DF credibility.

**Slide 29 – Sustaining Credibility (40s)**

In the grey zone, credibility is strategic capital.

It is lost faster than rebuilt.

Delay or jargon erodes trust; only quick, factual candour contains the damage .

Bachmann et al. show disinformation thrives where trust is weak,

but Bennett and Livingston argue institutional decline, not fake news, is the deeper wound.

This isn’t just about rapid response—though Lemmon stresses speed must balance verification to avoid the “say-do gap”.

For Ireland, the lesson is stark: leaders must speak plainly and act with integrity, but without repairing institutional trust, even the best communication falls short.

# Conclusion

Credibility is the Defence Forces’ centre of gravity.

It is protected not with silence or spin, but through ethical, consistent, plain-spoken communication.

To deny disinformation the initiative, we must fill the information space with clarity, candour, and speed—working alongside government and journalists.

And in crisis, words are not enough.

Action must follow, because rhetoric without change damages reputation more than any hybrid threat

Thank you