

Trained to Kill: Battlefield Participation in Kurdish Fighters Matthew Cancian









Can US training improve the
battlefield participation of our
partners?

Combat motivation: the reasons why soldiers under fire believe that they should continue fighting

Combat
Motivation



Battlefield
Participation



Combat
Effectiveness



Battlefield participation: attempting to defeat the enemy when under fire (vis non-participation by either fleeing or hiding)

Combat
Motivation



Battlefield
Participation



Combat
Effectiveness



Combat effectiveness: the “pound for pound” contribution of each soldier towards achieving victory under enemy fire

Combat Motivation



Battlefield Participation



Combat Effectiveness





Colonel Trevor Dupuy

“German divisions were 20 percent more effective than US divisions... Nine of the top 10 divisions in World War II were German.”





Cohesion

=



Combat Motivation





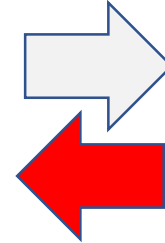
How does the experience of combat feed back into battlefield participation?



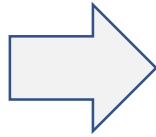
**Modern
System Tactics**



**Combat
Effectiveness**



**Battlefield
Participation**



**Combat
Motivation**



Modern- System Tactics

“A tightly interrelated complex of cover, concealment, dispersion, suppression, small-unit independent maneuver, and combined arms”

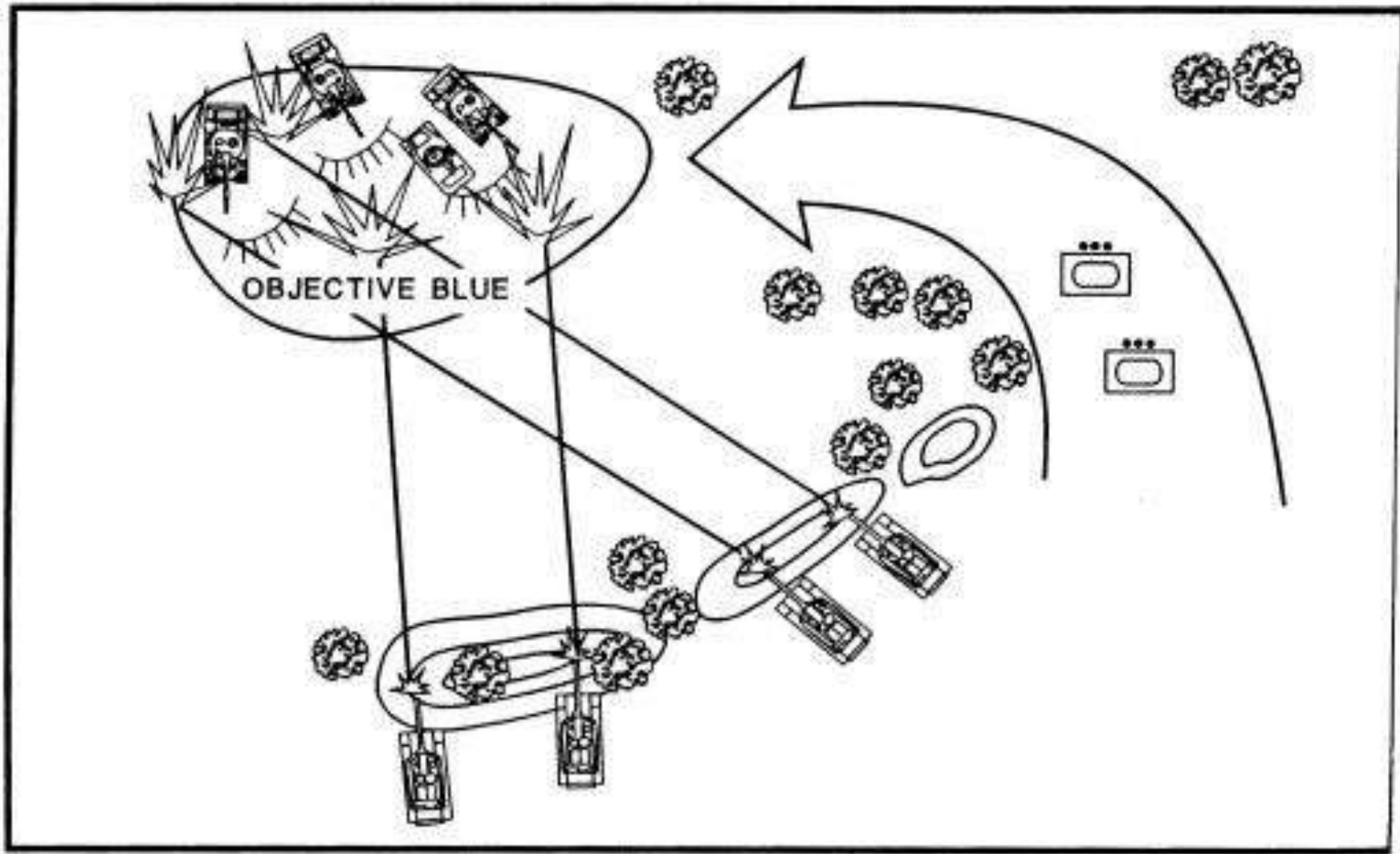
- Biddle 2006



Cover and Concealment

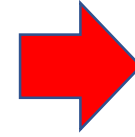


Dispersion



Suppression

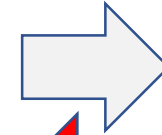
US Training



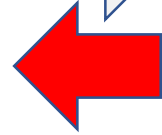
**Modern
System Tactics**



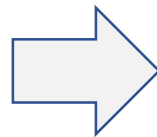
**Battlefield
Participation**



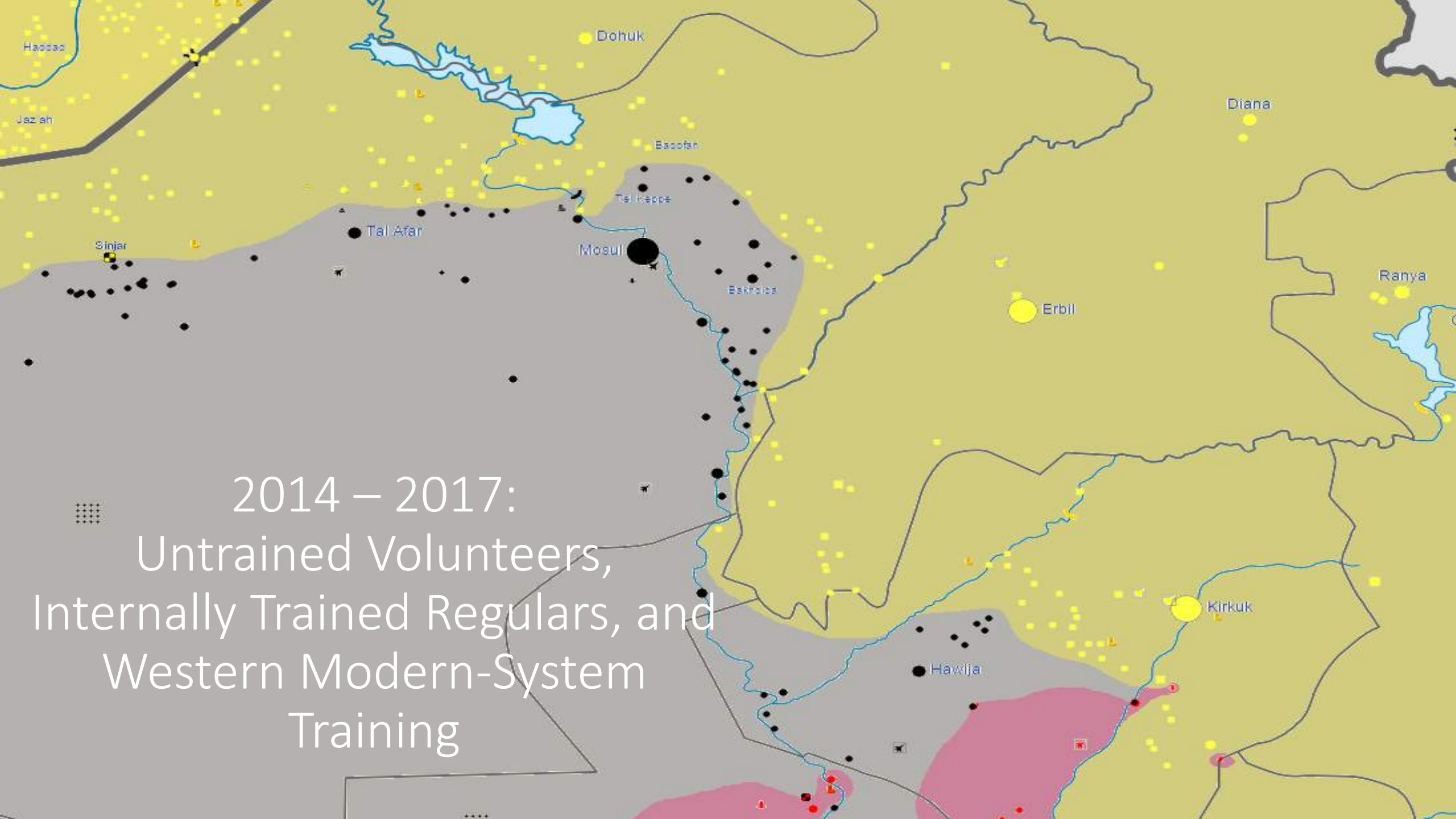
**Combat
Effectiveness**



**Combat
Motivation**







2014 – 2017:
Untrained Volunteers,
Internally Trained Regulars, and
Western Modern-System
Training



“Today the Barwari Bala tribe showed up in our thousands... to show them that we are here and that they will never take Kurdistan.”

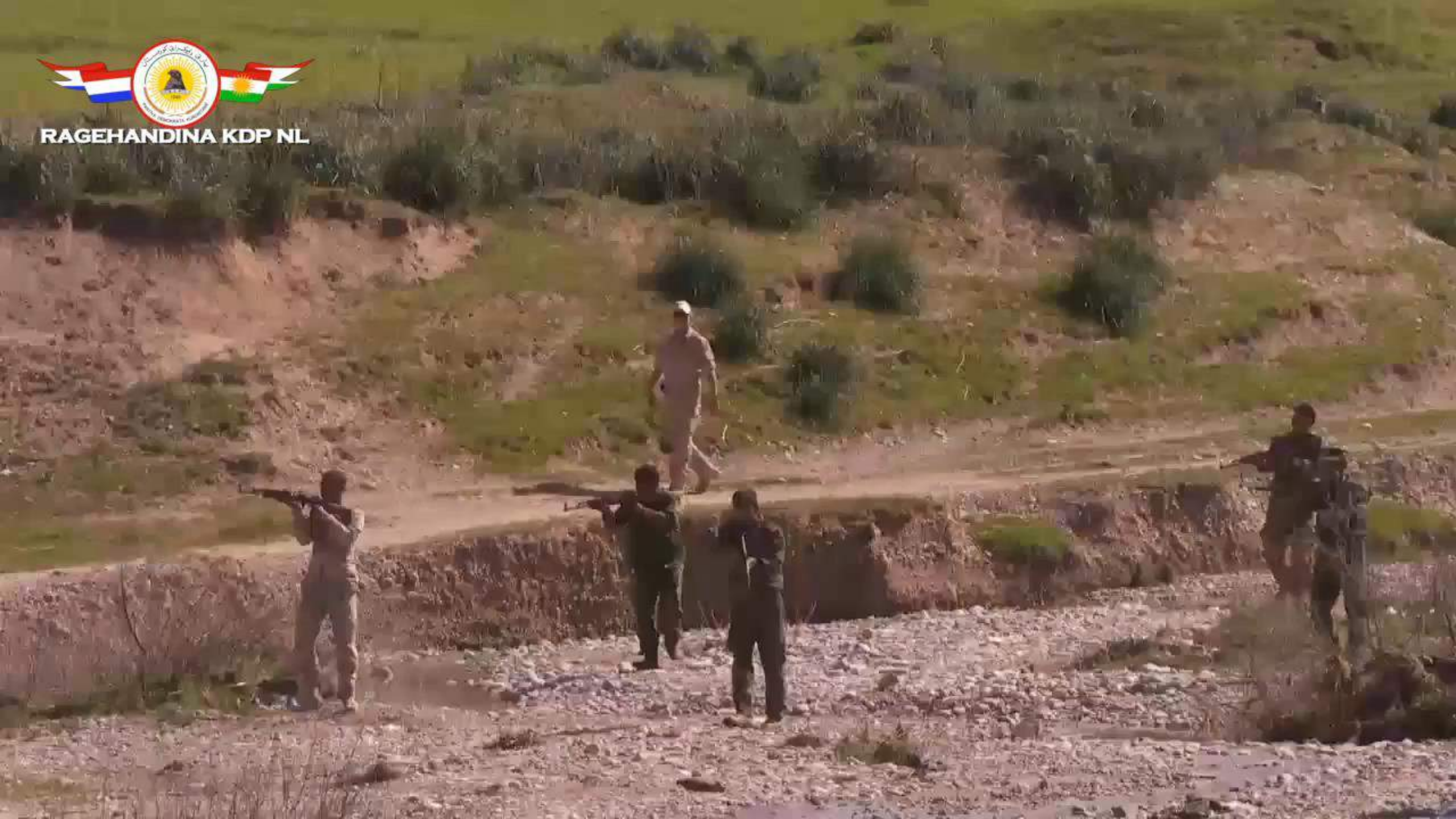








This is not helpful











Sinjar

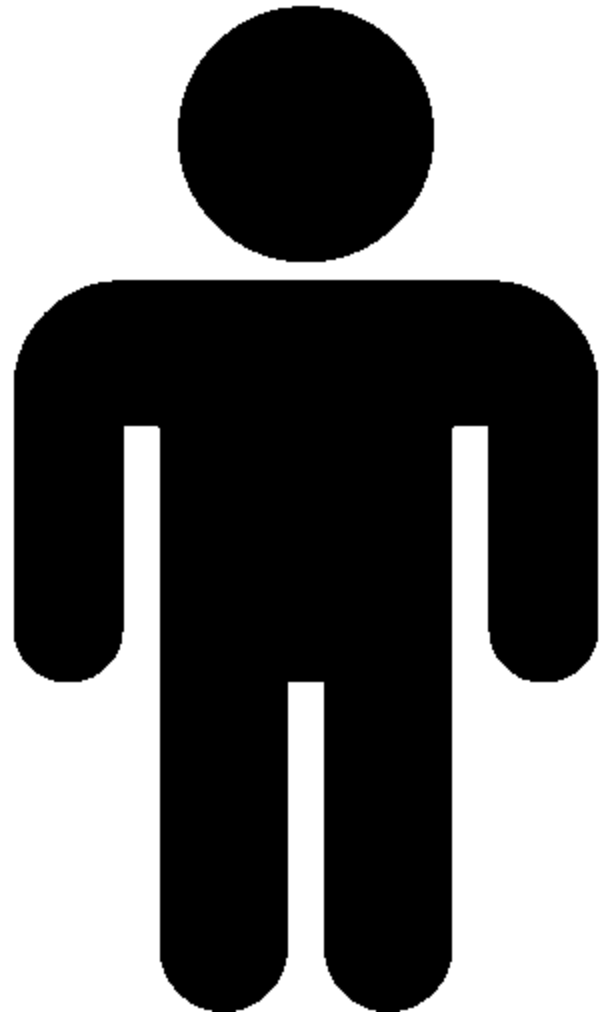
Mosul

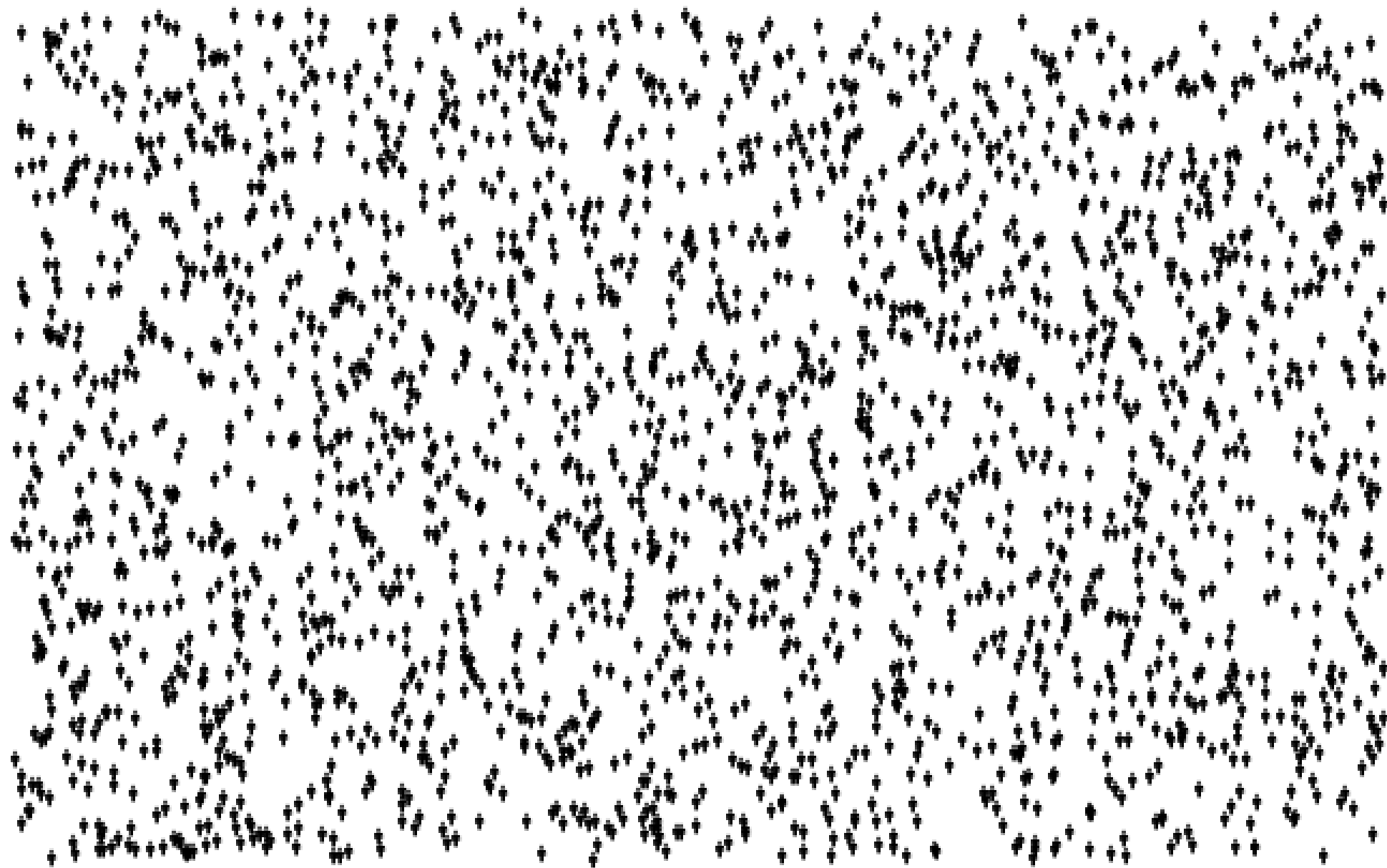
Erbil

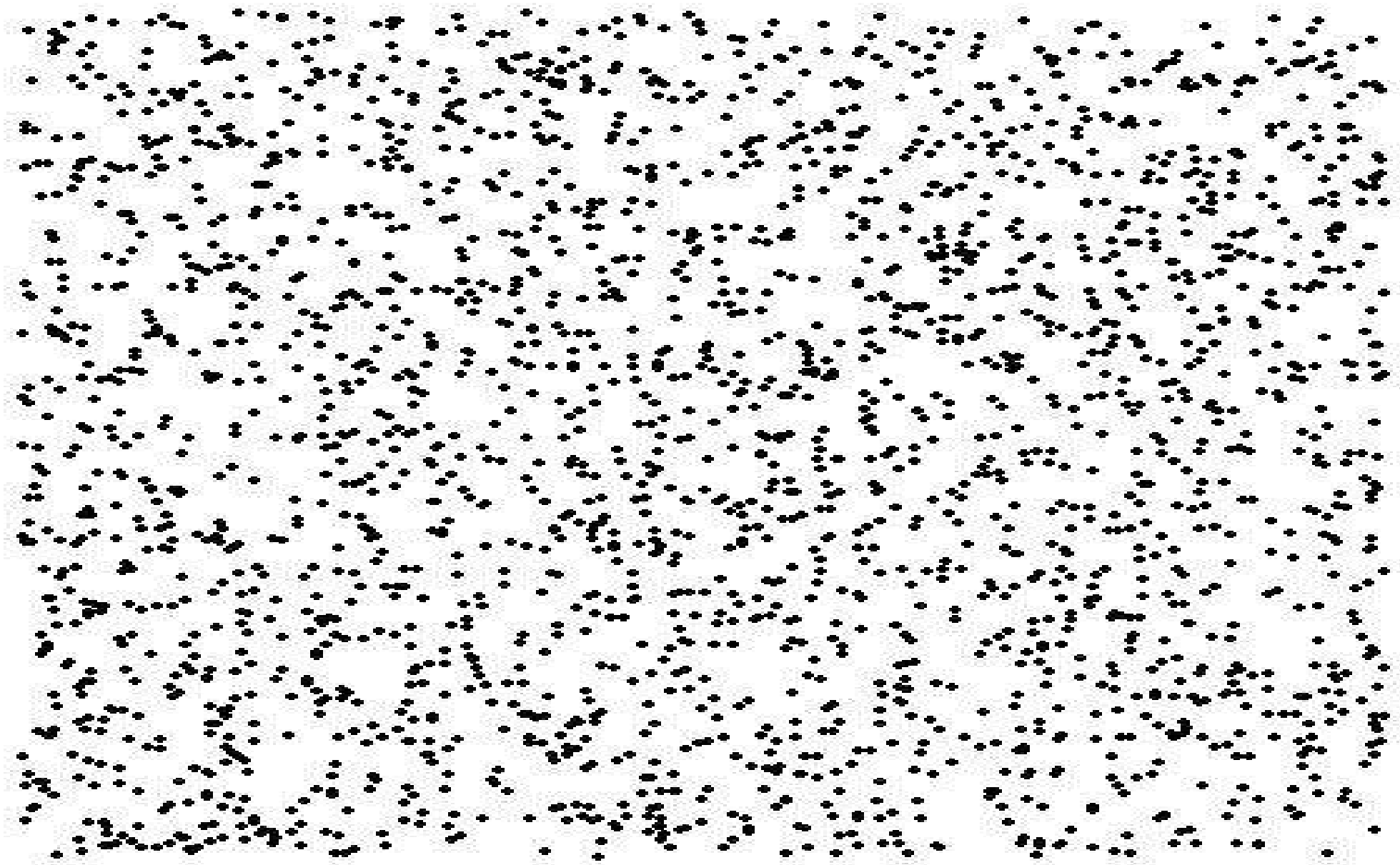
Kirkuk

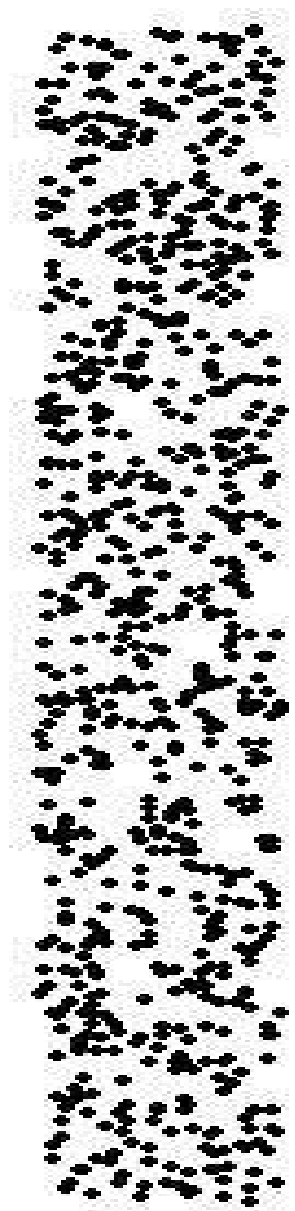
Halabja



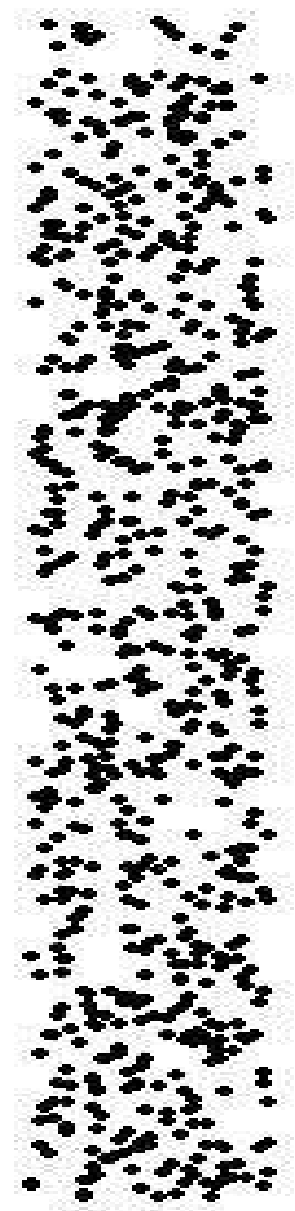




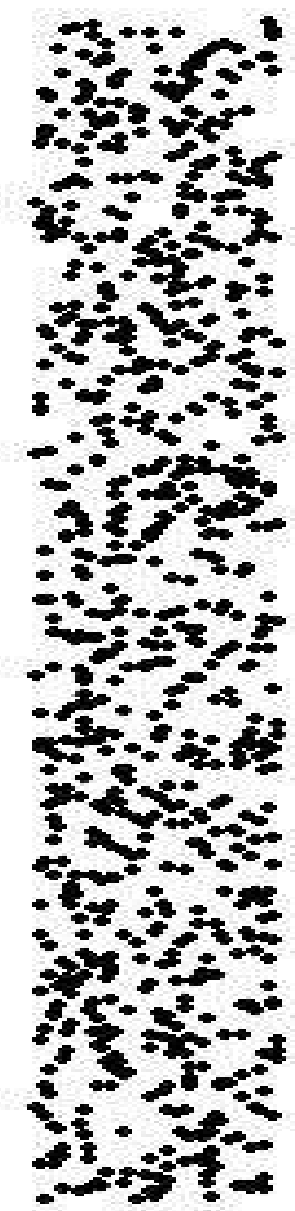




Untrained
32.9%



Internal
31.2%



Coalition
35.8%

Hypothesis 1:

Calculations of success will be marginally increased by internal training but dramatically increased by coalition training

**On a scale of zero to ten,
how confident are you in
your unit's readiness for
combat?**



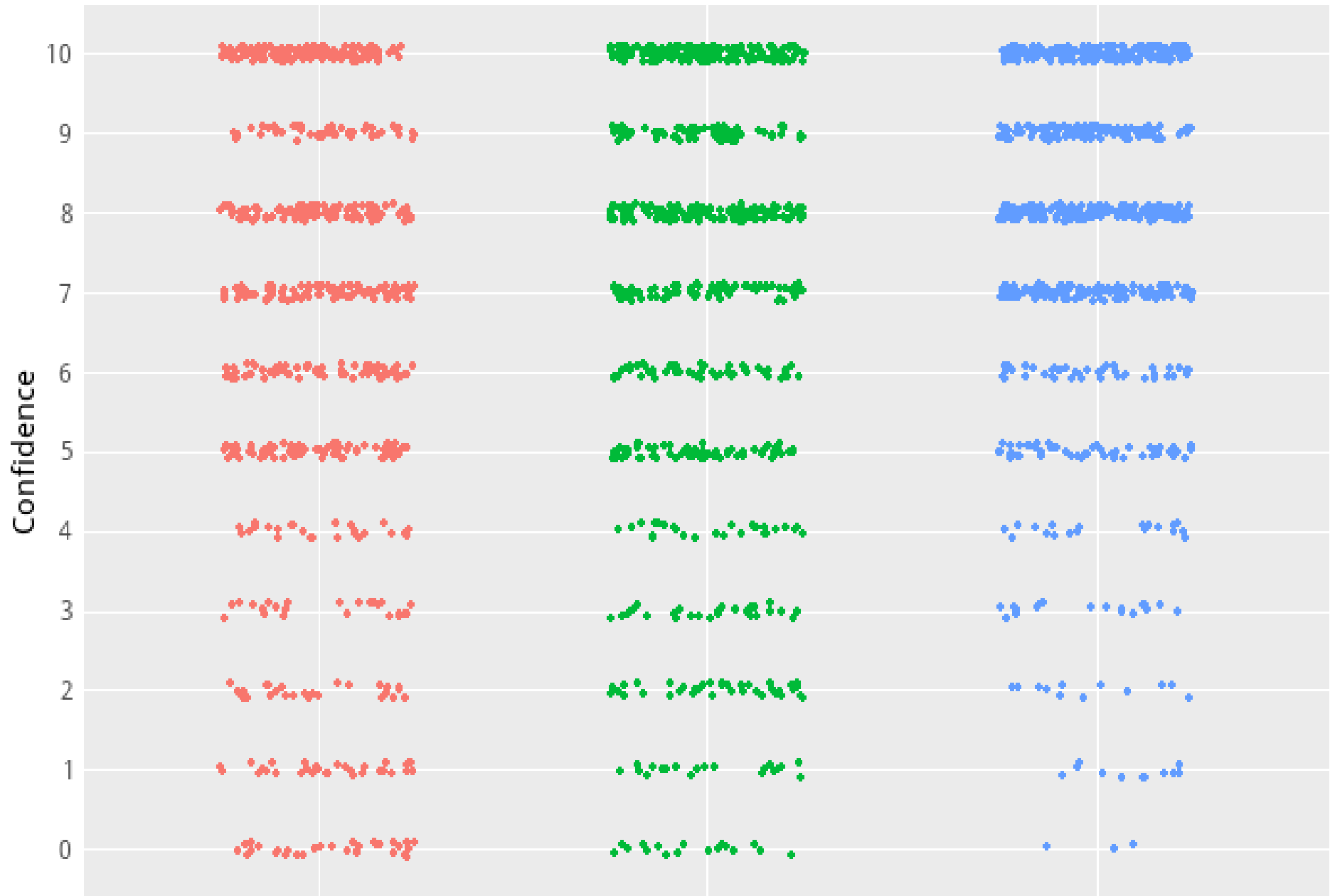
Untrained



Internal



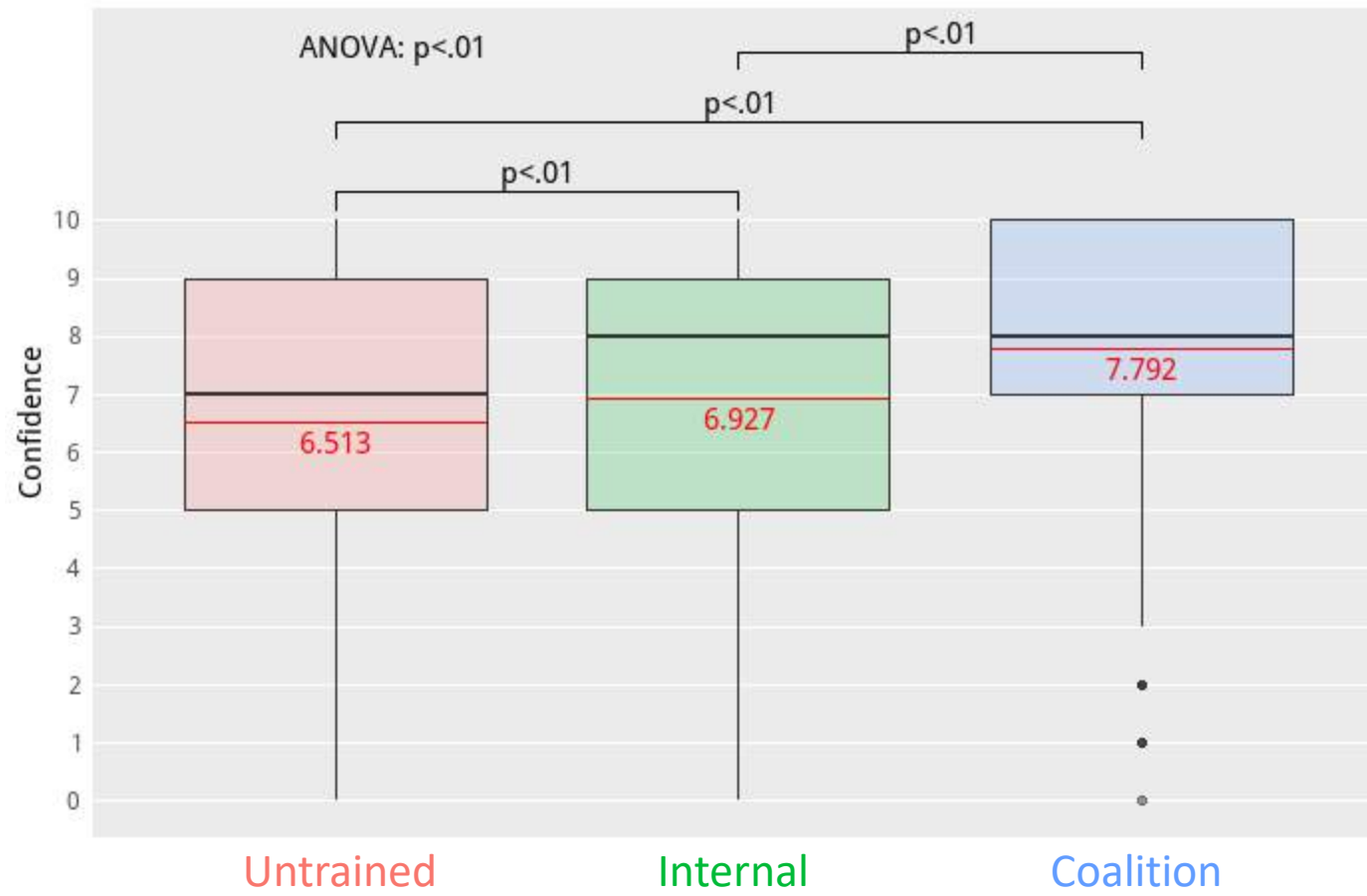
Coalition



Untrained

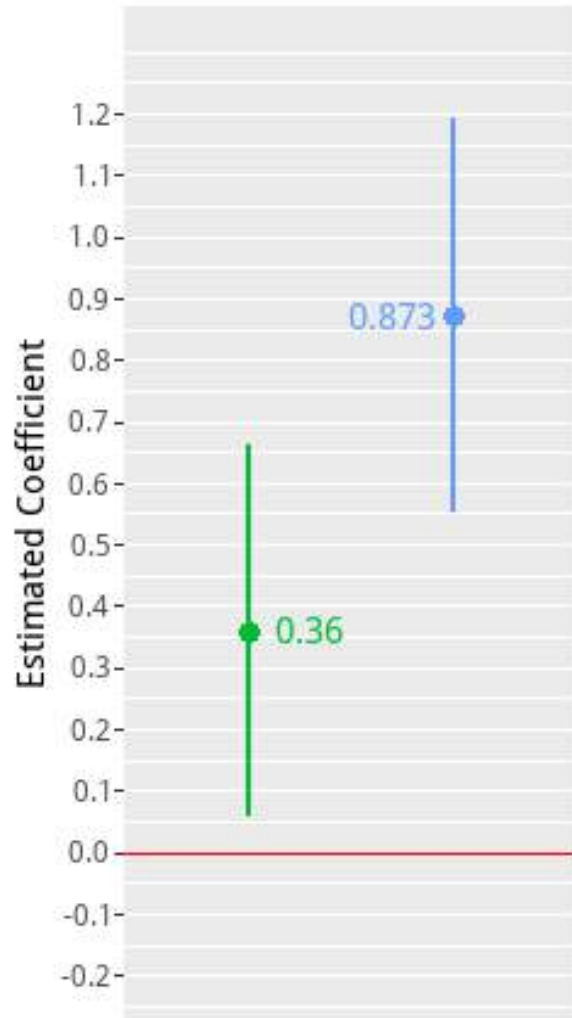
Internal

Coalition



Regress Training on Confidence

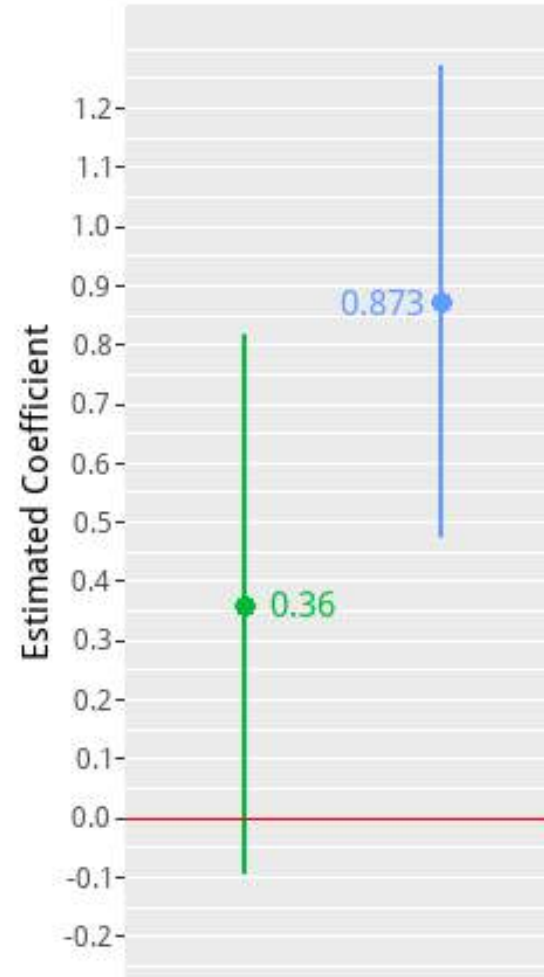
No Clustering



Internal Coalition

Regress Training on Confidence

Clustering on Bases



Internal Coalition

Hypothesis 2:

Coalition training will have a greater positive effect on battlefield participation than internal training



Untrained



Internal



Coalition



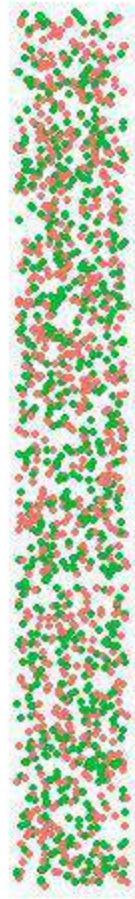
Untrained



Internal
Non-
Modern
System



Coalition
Modern
System



Non-
Modern
System



Modern
System



Non-
Modern
System



Modern
System

2,283 Peshmerga

Cutting Out Non-Combatants Reduces the Sample to 1,739



Non-
Modern
System



Modern
System

1,739 Peshmerga

Cutting Out Non-Riflemen Reduces the Sample to 955



Non-Modern System



Modern System

955 Peshmerga

**I'll read a number of statements. Don't
tell me which ones you agree with,
just tell me how many.**

In combat:

I'll read a number of statements. Don't tell me which ones you agree with, just tell me how many.

In combat:

Control Group

- There was a lot of noise
- The situation was confusing

+

Sensitive Group

- I didn't fire back but just waited for it to be over

Control Group

Sensitive Group



Non-
Modern
System

Modern
Modern
System

Control Group

n: 293

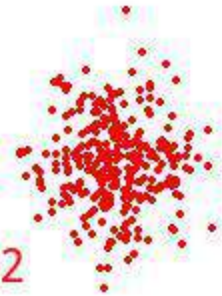


n: 178



Sensitive Group

n: 302



n: 182



Non-
Modern
System

Modern
System

Control Group



Sensitive Group



Non-
Modern
System

Modern
System

Control Group

1.076

1.246

+

+

?

?

=

=

Sensitive Group

1.236

1.264

Non-
Modern
System

Modern
System

Control Group

1.076

1.246

.169*

.028

Sensitive Group

1.236

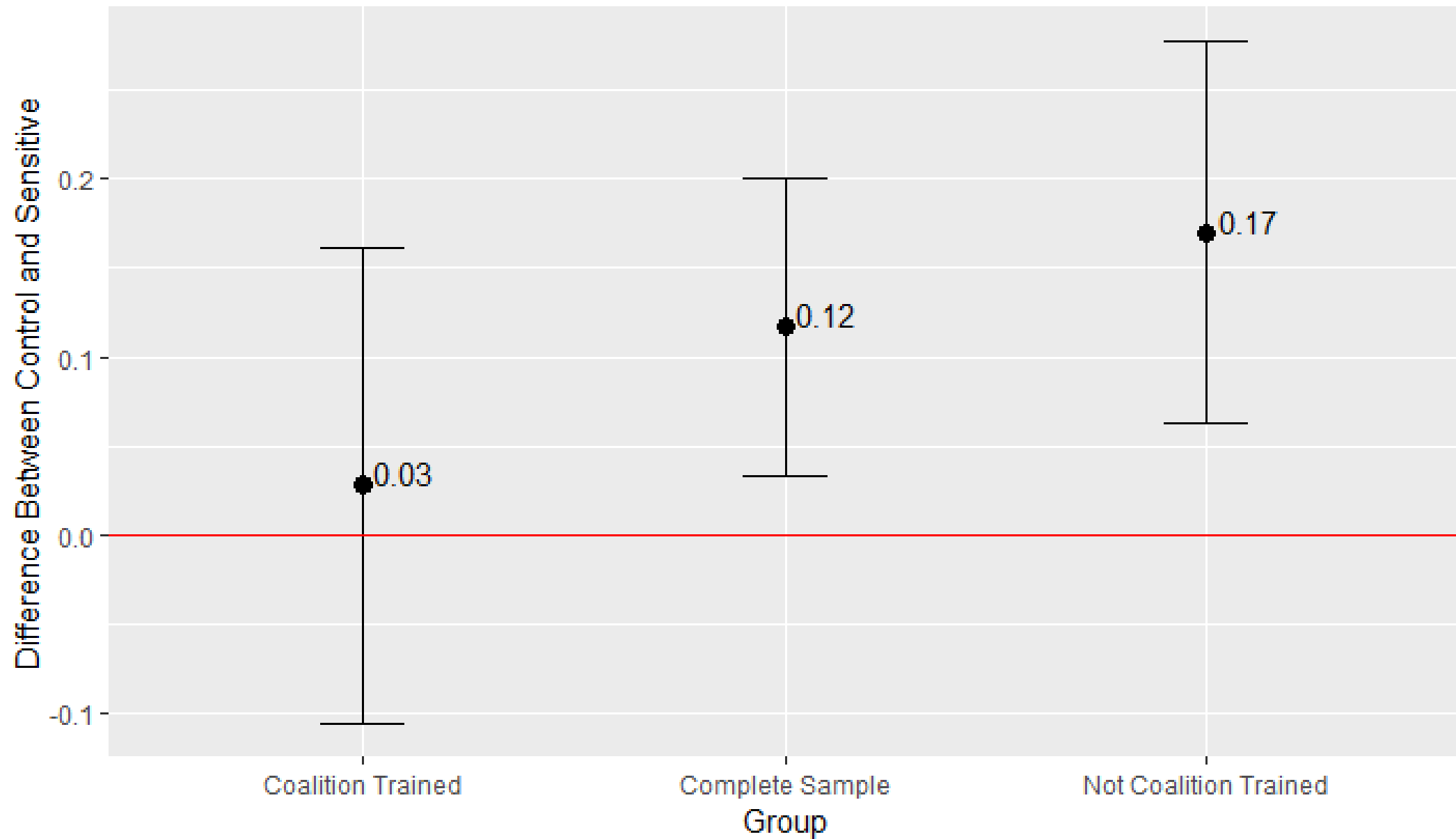
1.264

Non-
Modern
System

Modern
System

***: p<.01**

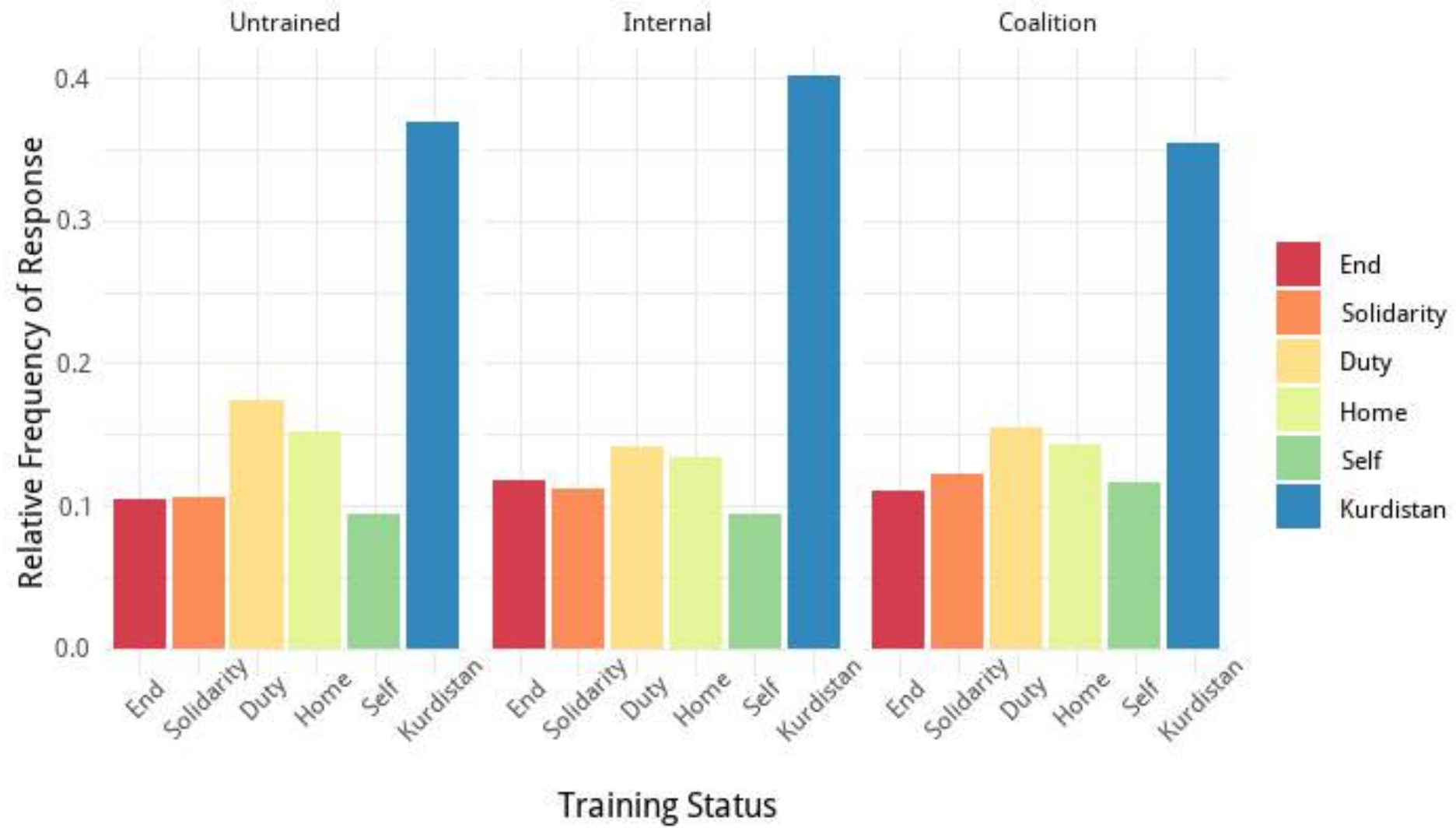
Survey List Experiment: Hiding in Combat for Riflemen



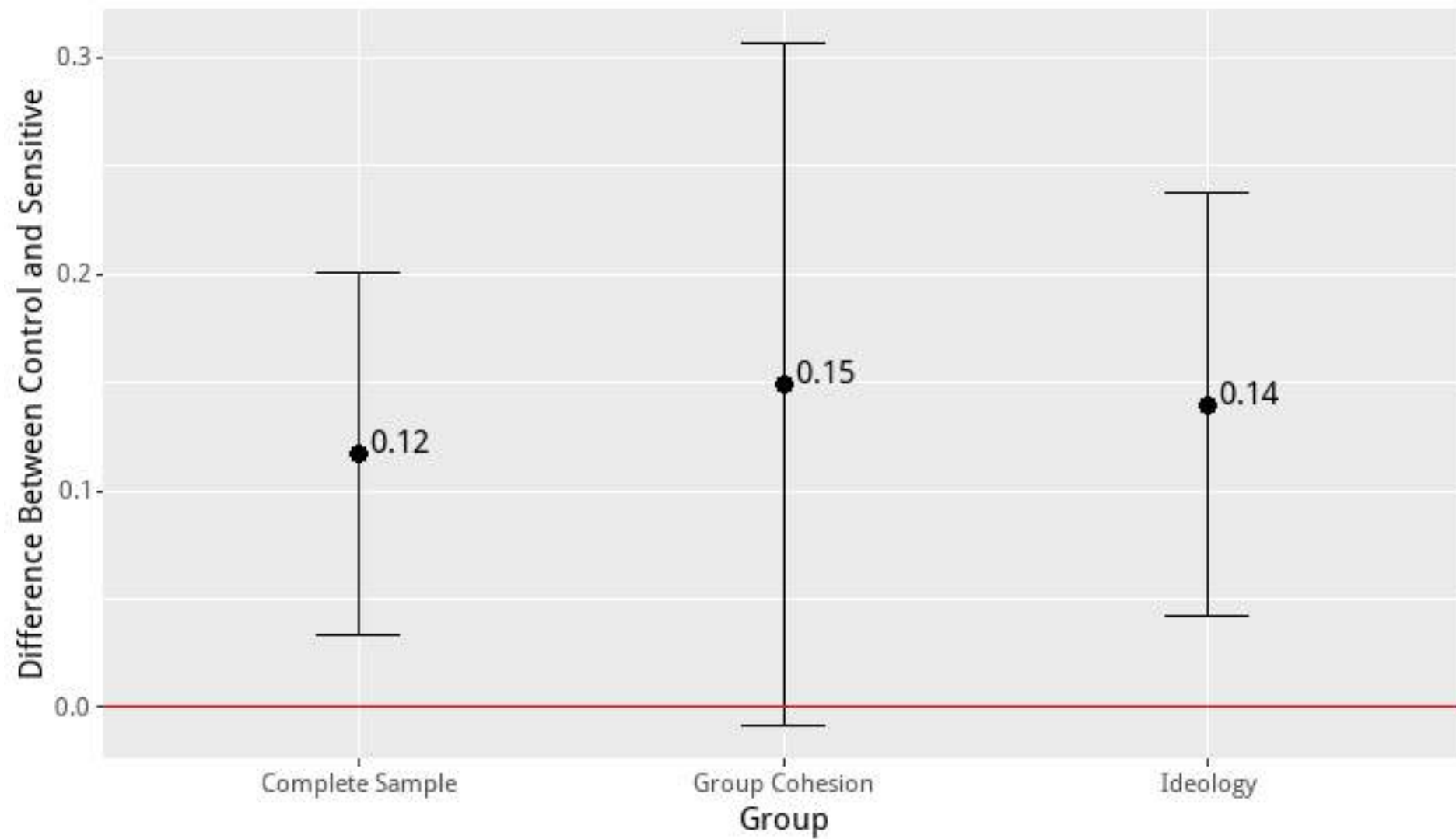
Traditional Argument:

“The source of combat motivation is key – we just need to know what motivates people and we will know both their battlefield participation”

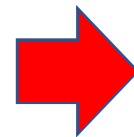
Combat Motivation for Riflemen



Survey List Experiment: Hiding in Combat for Riflemen



US Training

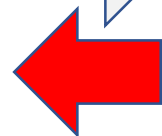
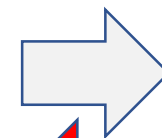


**Modern
System Tactics**

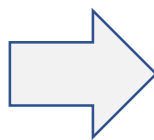


**Combat
Effectiveness**

**Battlefield
Participation**



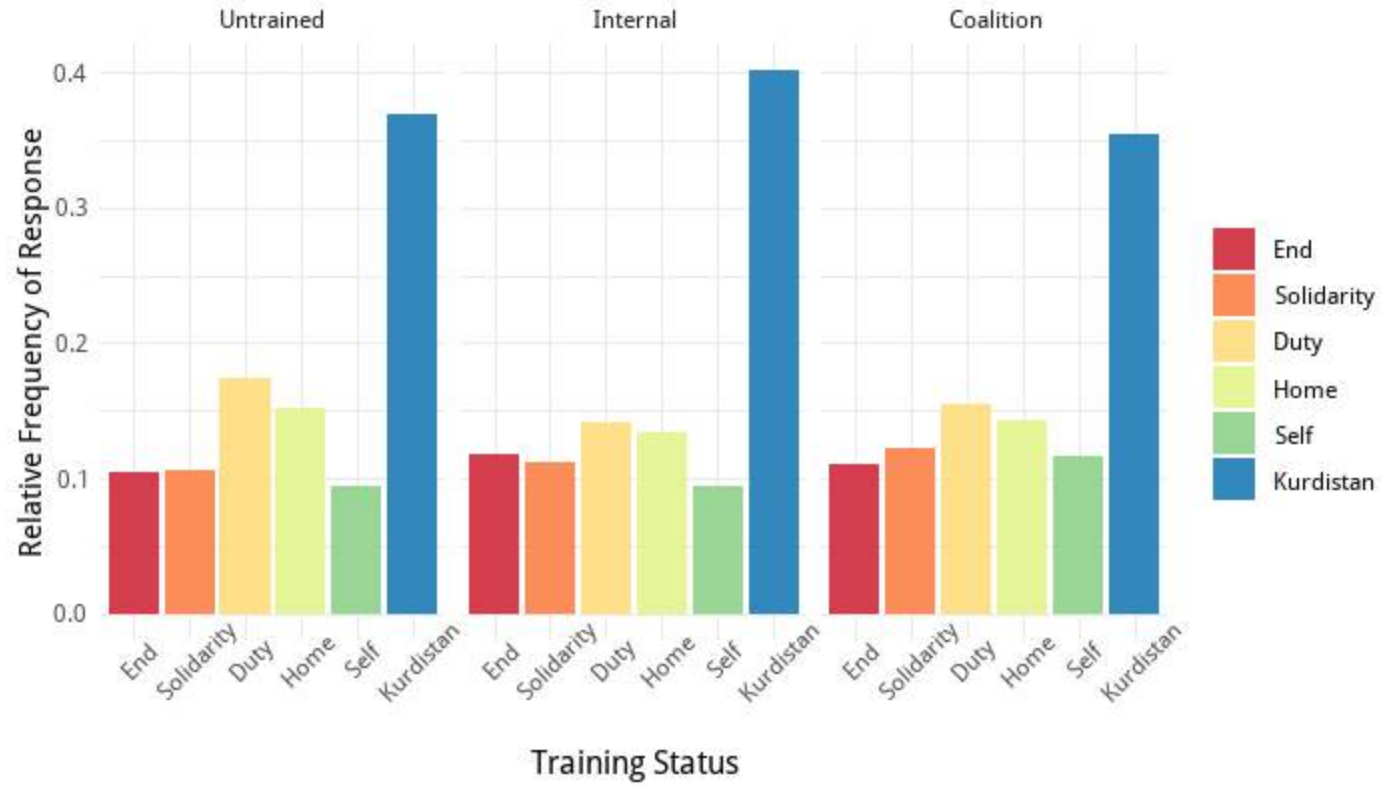
**Combat
Motivation**



Counter argument #1:

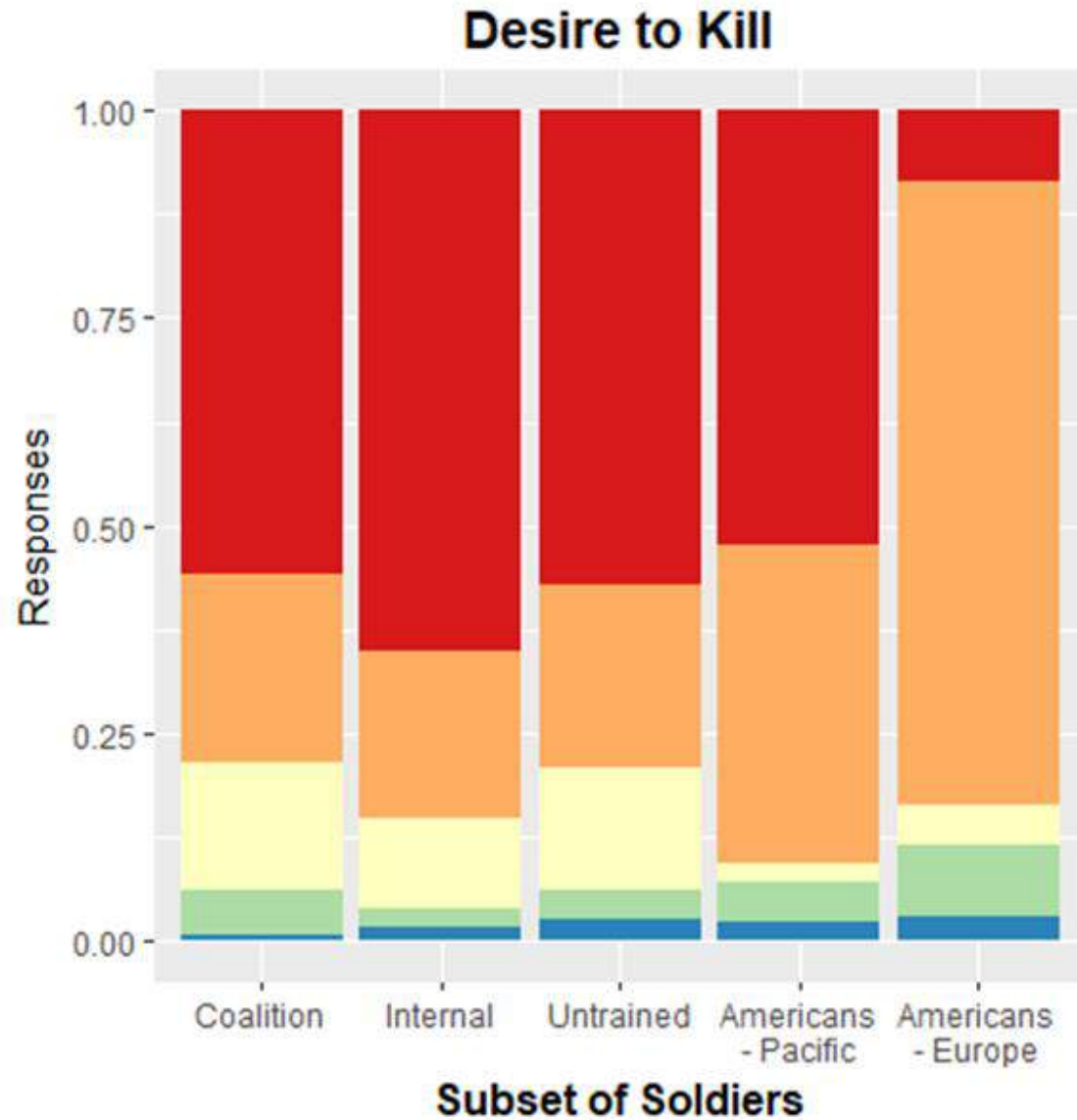
“Training is just changing the source of combat motivation – driving people from ideology to group solidarity or faith in their training”

Combat Motivation for Riflemen



Counter argument #2:

“Coalition training is pumping up soldiers to kill, not making them more effective”



Attitude Towards Killing



Counter argument #3:

**“Coalition training is just proxying
for improved equipment or fire
support”**





Survey List Experiment: Hiding in Combat for Riflemen

