

# ***None of Us Were Like This Before: American Soldiers and Torture,* by Joshua E. E. Phillips**

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Gerhardt Thamm

The inside of the book cover of *None of Us Were Like This Before: American Soldiers and Torture* states that the author investigated Sergeant Adam Gray's death. Sadly, I found interviews of family members and fellow soldiers but little evidence of a thorough investigation into the sergeant's death. Instead, I found that the author used Sergeant Adam Gray's death as the vehicle to once again surface the multitude of violations of the Geneva Conventions committed by the U.S. military.

Sergeant Gray's name pops up occasionally, but the author seems more enamored with describing his own forays into the hinterlands of Afghanistan than connecting Sergeant Gray to all these stories and tortures. My take is that Sergeant Gray had been traumatized by a single incident: "the accidental shooting that claimed two Iraqi lives." Have some of his friends been engaged in torture, or just rough handling of prisoners? No doubt that those who had just moments ago been trying to kill you will not be treated with kid gloves—there is also a certain fear factor involved, that is, "that bastard is dangerous."

For the average reader, it would have been helpful to know the difference between conventional and unconventional warfare and the different methods used in gathering information in both of types of warfare. Also missing is an explanation of the differences between a prisoner of war (POW), as defined by the Geneva Conventions, and a terrorist, a criminal, not recognized by the Geneva Conventions, that is, a person not wearing a uniform, not fighting under a recognized military command, and so forth.

The author did well to describe the flaws in employing combat troops that are in essence, as were we all, trained to kill the enemy. To quote General George S. Patton, "[w]ar is a bloody killing busi-

ness. You've got to spill their blood, or they will spill yours. Rip them up the belly. Shoot them in the guts . . . I believe in the old and sound rule that an ounce of sweat will save a gallon of blood. The more we kill, the fewer of our men will be killed . . . I want you all to remember that." This is brutally stated, but that is conventional warfare. We soldiers remember those words, and others, from basic training—the key word here is *basic*. Sergeant Gray was nurtured in this traditional war-fighting aura by his U.S. Army trainers, and he was trained and he trained his men to fight “like men.”

Unfortunately for those who joined the military “to blow up things”—a reason often mentioned in this book for joining the military—the U.S. Army changed course from the hard, tough, cigar-chewing Patton, to the politically correct generals with master's degrees and Ph.D.s. These Pentagon wonders had failed to imbue Sergeant Gray and his fellow soldiers with their credo. In fact, all along Sergeant Gray had received different signals from his local commanders, as well as from the Bush/Cheney team.

But the book is not about Sergeant Gray; it is about the ineptitude of military leaders, encouraged by the Bush/Cheney team, conducting a type of warfare for which neither the training nor the attitude of the soldiers is adequate to lead to “victory.” The author's notes are extensive, but I had expected not just another rehash of old stories, but some type of real connection between the many violations committed and Sergeant Adam Gray; I did not find it. What I found was a collection of previously aired cases of torture that were not befitting the United States or the U.S. military forces.

Finally, a few nitpicking items: The author misspelled *Luftwaffe* and interrogator Hanns Joachim Scharff's first name (it is not Hans). And the author's statement that in March 2003, training was on “new armored vehicles known as Bradleys” is incorrect; Bradleys have been around since 1981.

**Gerhardt Thamm** is a retired U.S. Army special agent and interrogator. From February until May 1945, he fought as a “boy soldier” with the 100th German Jäger Division on the Eastern Front, before joining the U.S. military. His books include *The Making of a Spy: Memoir of a German Boy Soldier Turned American Army Intelligence Agent* (2010) and *Boy Soldier: A German Teenager at the Nazi Twilight* (2000).