Come as you are — what with?

Much of this country’s military planning today is focused on deterring or repelling, a Soviet-led Warsaw Pact attack on NATO. The scenario that strategists consider most likely involves a blitzkrieg-type attack, launched with little or no warning, by armor, artillery, and missile-heavy forces designed to smash NATO defenses before reserves can be brought from the United States.

Many observers think the threat of such an attack is so great that the Soviets forge ahead of the United States in conventional military power.

The National Guard has a more-than-academic interest in this subject, and in the ongoing debate over the so-called “NATO short war scenario.” Guard units, Army and Air, comprise a veritable share of the forces that must be ready for short-notice mobilization and hasty deployment to Europe to blunt such an attack.

It’s also the short-war scenario from which the “come as you are” theme emerged. Under that oligarchic concept, U.S. military elements would rush to Europe to reinforce the NATO forces already in place, with whatever manpower, equipment and readiness they had at the outbreak of hostilities.

At stake for the Guard and Reserve in the current “short war” debate is the entire Total Force concept. Under that concept, Guard/Reserve forces were to receive more resources, more assistance and more cooperation from the active forces. From that added support and resources, the Guard and Reserve war to produce reader units — units that could mobilize and deploy far more rapidly than in the past.

Now, the question’s being asked with greater frequency as the price tag becomes more apparent. How do we do it? Can Guard and Reserve units attain the state of readiness they must have if they’re to mobilize with a week’s warning — or less — and deploy overseas in three, four, or five weeks?

The answer has not really changed much from last year. We pointed out then that Guard units maintain levels of readiness commensurate with their more urgent missions if they are given support, resources and assistance commensurate with these missions. Full-time

Army and Air Force units can’t produce rapid-response readiness with inadequate equipment, virtually no recruiting inducements, etc. Neither can the Guard or Reserve. Yet the budget-makers and the contractors of DoD and OMB persist in nibbling away at our assets for the sake of nickle-and-dime savings, at the same time that the active military services are rightly probing us to improve our readiness.

there’s another aspect to the “NATO short war — Can you get there?” debate that disturbs us. It’s a belief, in some Congressional and Pentagon minds, that any Guard/Reserve units that cannot deploy to Western Europe in the initial stages of a conflict — you’ll hear any requirement from six days to 60 from various sources — are not essential and need not be retained. Such an assumption is not warranted and, if accepted, will increase the national risk.

If it’s far too far behind Soviet Russia in quickly available conventional military power, we raise the probability that we will have to resort to battlefield weapons almost from the onset of combat — probably capitulate next, as Senator Nunn so eloquently pointed out not long ago. "At some point, numbers do count. At some point, technology fails to offset mass. At some point, Kipling’s ‘thin red line of heroes’ give way.”

Finally, if a NATO war erupts despite our efforts to deter such a catastrophic turn of events — whether it’s the predicted ‘short violent war’ or a more protracted conflict, whether it remains conventional or turns nuclear, whether we successfully repel the Warsaw Pact forces or fail, far from needing fewer men and units, we’ll be praying desperately for more.

With or without the Army, the NATO army for all practical purposes will be destroyed. Modern technology, including Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs), almost guarantees unprecedented carnage, even if nuclear weapons are not used.

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Weekender’s delight
That comment summarized reaction to an Air Force combat training program for Air Guard fighter units called Red Flag.

Jack Frost 77
Unseasonable weather failed to hamper Arctic training for Army and Air Guardsmen during winter exercises.

Mobility & Firepower
Two new helicopters provide improved mobility and firepower for the active Army while allowing “fall-out” of additional resources for the Air Guard.

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Cover: A scale map depicting a portion of Red Flag “order of battle” at southern Nevada range. Symbols represent enemy and friendly equipment. Red lines separate individual ranges. Map designed by Maj 153TH TFW Intelligence section.

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