

**Title:** Women on the Front Lines in Myanmar's Fight for Democracy

Speaker: Dr. Miemie Winn Byrd

Date: 26 May 2022

Time: 1200-1315

Where: Virtual LOO via Zoom

POC: Dr. Saira Yamin

Zoom Link:

[https://usnwc.zoom.us/j/89025623867?pwd=o1vgGM8dqe-Oe4fchRT455JPEz\\_C7w.1](https://usnwc.zoom.us/j/89025623867?pwd=o1vgGM8dqe-Oe4fchRT455JPEz_C7w.1)

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**SYNOPSIS:**

The military seized control of Myanmar (Burma) on February 1, 2021 after a general election. The coup was followed by a brutal military crackdown, particularly against women. "The very first fatality of the military's ruthless suppression was a 19-year-old woman named Mya Thwet Khine. A sniper fatally shot her in the head while she participated in a rally near Nay Pyi Taw, the country's capital city. Since her death, many more female protesters have been killed, arrested, and assaulted by the military as they demonstrated against the coup. The military raided homes in the middle of the night, dragged the women off to jail, and locked them up without due process. Once in captivity, many of them were subjected to tortured interrogations and sexual assaults."

Dr. Byrd will detail how women are more innovative in their methods of resistance against the new regime and have formed the backbone of the revolution. In an article on the topic, she writes, "The women are utilizing feminine qualities and newly acquired capabilities gained since the opening to counter the military junta. The capabilities are bringing innovative tactics to the fight. Women protesters hoisted traditional women's sarongs and undergarments over the streets to stop the advancing troops. They are creatively utilizing the deep-rooted belief that men's masculine superiority, *hpone*, will vanish if the women's sarongs and undergarments soar directly above the men's heads. This tactic stopped the advancing armed troops in their tracks. They did not dare to cross the clotheslines, and the women were able to save lives that day. Since then, the regime has made such tactics illegal and brutally raided homes of the women who had engineered them." Women on the Front Lines in Myanmar's Fight for Democracy. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Aug 26, 2021.

**BIO:**

Dr. Miemie Winn Byrd is a Professor at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii. Dr. Byrd researches, teaches, and publishes in the areas of U.S.-

Myanmar (Burma) relations; security dynamics in Southeast Asia; economics and security linkages; rising inequality and its implication on security; the roles of private-sector, women, and education in socioeconomic development; civil-military operations; leadership; organizational development & innovation; women peace & security; and transformational learning & adult education.

Dr. Byrd's selected publications include: "Has Myanmar Become China's Back Door to the Indian Ocean?" Chapter in *Hindsight, Insight, Foresight*; "Worlds Apart: Why North Korea Won't Follow Myanmar's Path to Reform" in *Global Asia*; "Why the U.S. Should Gender its Counterterrorism Strategy" in *The Military Review Journal*; "Combating Terrorism: A Socio-Economic Strategy" and "Combating Terrorism with Socioeconomics: Leveraging the Private Sector" in *Joint Force Quarterly*, a professional military and security journal published for the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff by National Defense University; and "Education, Economic Growth, and Social Stability: Why the Three Are Inseparable" in APCSS' publication, *American and Russian Perspective on Security and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific*. She also served as the editor for USPACOM's Asia-Pacific Economic Update publications.

Dr. Byrd retired from the U.S. Army after 28 years of distinguished service. Highlights of her military career include serving as the Deputy Economic Advisor, Civil-Military Operations Plans Officer, and Interagency Operations Officer at U.S. Pacific Command in support of Operations Enduring Freedom. She had also served as a linguist and cultural advisor to the U.S. delegations attending the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum, POW/MIA recovery negotiations in Myanmar (Burma), and Operation Caring Response to Cyclone Nargis, and US-Myanmar (Burma) Human Rights Dialogues.

Her 16 years of civilian private-sector professional experience included a wide range of auditing, accounting, and financial management positions with multinational corporations such as Law & Economics Consulting Group (LECG), Gillette, GTC (General Telephone and Electronics) and Ernst & Young and also with a Silicon Valley start-up firm, Wyzdom.com. Dr. Byrd spearheaded the effort to establish and launch Suu Foundation (501c3 US non-profit entity) at the request of the Noble Peace Laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in 2013. Dr. Byrd is currently serving on the Board of Governors of the Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies at Claremont McKenna College, and as an Adjunct Fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Dr. Byrd received a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Accounting from Claremont McKenna College and holds a Master of Business Administration with emphasis in Asia-Pacific Economics and Business from University of Hawaii. She earned her Doctorate in Education Leadership from the University of Southern California.