

BRUNEI SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: October 23, 2026 - October 30, 2026

This report was produced using open-source intelligence analysis. The assessment is grounded in publicly available reporting and should be cross-referenced with primary sources. RSS feed articles are listed in the annex for reference.

Brunei Security Analysis Report: October 23 - October 30, 2026

Executive Summary

During the period of October 23 to October 30, 2026, Brunei Darussalam maintained a proactive and engaged stance in regional security and diplomatic affairs, with a notable focus on strengthening bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Key developments included high-level diplomatic engagements with Singapore and China, underscoring enduring relationships and exploring new avenues for cooperation. Brunei actively participated in significant ASEAN defense and transnational crime ministerial meetings, reaffirming its commitment to regional stability and addressing shared security challenges. The nation also progressed in its military modernization efforts, with the impending delivery of new Airbus H145M helicopters. Cybersecurity remained a prominent area of focus, with Brunei hosting regional working group meetings and continuing efforts to enhance national digital resilience.

Key Security Developments

- Diplomatic Visit by Foreign Minister to Singapore

His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Mateen, Brunei's Minister of Foreign Affairs, conducted an introductory visit to Singapore from October 21 to 23, 2026. The visit reaffirmed the special and longstanding relationship between the two nations, building on 50 years of defense ties, and included discussions on strengthening bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest, as well as exchanges on ASEAN, regional, and international developments. As part of his program, Prince Mateen visited the Singapore Armed Forces' (SAF) Special Operations Task Force and received a briefing on Singapore's national AI strategy, reflecting a focus on advanced defense capabilities and emerging technologies.

- Participation in ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus

Brunei's Ministry of Defence participated in the 20th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the 13th ADMM-Plus, held in Cebu, Republic of the Philippines, on October 28 and 29, 2026, respectively. These meetings saw the adoption of five new initiatives aimed at strengthening regional security cooperation, including

promoting exchanges among younger defense leaders and enhancing collective resilience against chemical, biological, and radiological threats. On the sidelines, the Philippines held bilateral meetings with several countries, including Brunei, indicating ongoing direct defense dialogues.

- Dialogue Marking 35th Anniversary of China-Brunei Diplomatic Ties

On October 23, 2026, a dialogue was held in Bandar Seri Begawan to commemorate the 35th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Brunei. Co-organized by Xinhua News Agency, the Chinese Embassy, and Radio Television Brunei, the event focused on reviewing friendly exchanges and discussing the advancement of a China-Brunei community with a shared future, with thematic panel discussions covering artificial intelligence, communications, and cultural exchanges. This highlights the continued importance of the bilateral relationship and its expansion into new technological domains.

- Participation in ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC)

Brunei Darussalam participated in the 20th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and its related meetings in Makati City, Republic of the Philippines, from October 19 to 21, 2026. The Bruneian delegation, led by the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office (Security and Law), reaffirmed the nation's commitment to addressing transnational crimes such as trafficking in persons (TIP), terrorism, violent extremism, money laundering, online scams, and illicit drug trafficking. Brunei also highlighted its upgrade to Tier 2 in the United States 2026 Trafficking in Persons Report, demonstrating progress in combating human trafficking.

- Advancement in Defence Acquisitions: Airbus H145M Helicopters

Brunei is on track to receive its first batch of six Airbus H145M helicopters in November 2026, following the signing of the Customer Acceptance Test (CAT) certificate by the Ministry of Defence in Germany around October 19-20, 2026. These multi-role helicopters are intended to replace the Royal Brunei Air Force's (RBAirF) decommissioned Bolkow BO-105 fleet, significantly enhancing capabilities for missions such as close air support (CAS) and aerial observation.

- Hosting of ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting

Cyber Security Brunei (CSB) hosted the 2nd ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting of 2026 in Bandar Seri Begawan during this period. The meeting served as a platform for Brunei and other ASEAN Member States, alongside Japan, to discuss and coordinate on regional cybersecurity resilience, strategy sharing, and capacity building. Local cybersecurity companies were also invited to showcase their products and services, fostering potential regional collaborations.

- Commemoration of 40 Years of Diplomatic Relations with Oman

On October 26, 2026, Oman and Brunei celebrated the 40th anniversary of their diplomatic relations in Muscat, Oman. Discussions during the event focused on enhancing cooperation across various sectors, including education, culture, defense, economic investment, energy cooperation, and food security, indicating a broad and deepening partnership.

- Ongoing Cybersecurity Awareness and Threat Mitigation

Brunei continues to demonstrate a proactive approach to cybersecurity, with efforts to address online scams and digital fraud through inter-agency cooperation and the preparation of new guidelines for Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) owners. The Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) has also been conducting cybercrime awareness briefings to educate the public on threats and preventive measures. While older data, a reported nearly 40% increase in cybersecurity attacks in 2018 by BruCERT, attributed partly to increased reporting awareness, highlights the persistent nature of cyber threats.

- Participation in Regional Defence Education Forum

The Defence Academy of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (DA RBAF) participated in the 28th ASEAN Regional Forum Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges and Institutions Meeting (ARF HDUCIM), held from October 20 to 23, 2026, in Victoria, Canada. This engagement underscores Brunei's commitment to fostering defense intellectual exchange and capacity building within the broader Indo-Pacific security architecture.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Brunei's security developments during this period underscore its consistent foreign policy of active engagement, multilateral cooperation, and strategic balancing within the dynamic Indo-Pacific region. The high-level diplomatic visits and participation in ASEAN forums reinforce Brunei's commitment to ASEAN centrality as a cornerstone of regional stability. Prince 'Abdul Mateen's visit to Singapore, following the commemoration of 50 years of defense ties, highlights the enduring strength of this bilateral relationship, which serves as a model for intra-ASEAN cooperation and contributes to a stable regional security architecture.

The dialogue marking 35 years of diplomatic ties with China, focusing on a "community with a shared future" and emerging technologies like AI, reflects Brunei's pragmatic approach to engaging major powers. While Brunei maintains a preference for "quiet diplomacy" in the South China Sea disputes, its continued engagement with China on various fronts indicates a strategy of balancing economic interests with security concerns, without overtly confronting Beijing. Simultaneously, Brunei's participation in the ADMM and ADMM-Plus meetings, which included discussions with the United States and Japan, demonstrates its commitment to a diversified security

network and its role in fostering a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The emphasis on cybersecurity cooperation through the ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Working Group Meeting and internal initiatives reflects a regional recognition of evolving threats. This collective approach to digital resilience is crucial for protecting critical infrastructure and maintaining economic stability across Southeast Asia. Brunei's active role in these discussions contributes to a more robust regional defense against non-traditional security threats, aligning with broader international efforts to secure the digital domain.

Military and Defense Analysis

Brunei's military and defense posture during this period is characterized by ongoing modernization efforts and a strong emphasis on interoperability through regional and international exercises. The impending delivery of six Airbus H145M helicopters in November 2026 represents a significant upgrade for the Royal Brunei Air Force (RBAirF), replacing an aging fleet and enhancing capabilities for close air support and aerial observation. This acquisition aligns with Brunei's long-term national development plan, Wawasan Brunei 2035, which aims to bolster national defense objectives and economic resilience.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence's international tender for advanced Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) and Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) UAV systems indicates a strategic move towards next-generation surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. This investment reflects a recognition of the evolving nature of warfare and the importance of modernizing intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) assets. While specific defense spending trends for the reporting week are not available, a 32% surge in Brunei's defense budget to B$796.3 million in 2024 provides context for these ongoing modernization programs.

Brunei's participation in exercises like CARAT Brunei (which concluded in September 2026, but its planning and strategic implications are ongoing) with the United States, and its deep defense ties with Singapore, exemplified by the 50th-anniversary commemorations, are crucial for enhancing force posture and interoperability. These engagements allow the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) to refine naval tactics, improve maritime domain awareness, and build shared operational capabilities, particularly relevant for maritime security in the South China Sea.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): In the immediate future, Brunei will likely focus on the integration of the new Airbus H145M helicopters into the Royal Brunei Air Force, with initial training and operational familiarization expected to be a priority following their November 2026 delivery. Diplomatic activities will continue to center around ASEAN-led mechanisms, particularly as Singapore takes over the ADMM chairmanship in 2027, which Brunei will actively support to maintain regional security dialogue momentum. Cybersecurity initiatives, including the implementation of new guidelines for Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) and ongoing public awareness campaigns, will remain a key focus for national digital resilience.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The South China Sea remains a persistent, albeit managed, risk area for Brunei. While Brunei prefers "quiet diplomacy," any escalation of tensions among other claimants or major powers could indirectly impact its maritime security and economic interests. Cyber threats, particularly malicious logic, malware, and online scams, continue to pose a significant risk to Brunei's digital infrastructure and citizens, necessitating sustained vigilance and investment in cybersecurity defenses. Transnational crime, including trafficking in persons, money laundering, and illicit drug trafficking, will continue to be a challenge, requiring ongoing regional and international cooperation.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress of the H145M helicopter integration and the outcomes of the UAV procurement tender, which will signal the pace and direction of Brunei's military modernization. Developments in Brunei's engagement with major powers like China and the United States, especially regarding economic cooperation and defense dialogues, will be crucial for understanding its strategic balancing act. Furthermore, any new regional cybersecurity initiatives or reported significant cyber incidents will indicate the evolving threat landscape and Brunei's adaptive capacity.

Strategic recommendations: Brunei should continue to leverage its strong diplomatic ties within ASEAN and with key dialogue partners to promote a rules-based international order and de-escalation in the South China Sea. Investing further in cybersecurity infrastructure and human capital development is paramount to protect critical national assets and foster a cyber-smart society. The nation should also prioritize the seamless integration of new defense acquisitions, ensuring that personnel are adequately trained and that new capabilities enhance overall force readiness and interoperability with allies. Finally, maintaining active participation in regional forums on transnational crime and disaster response will strengthen Brunei's collective security and humanitarian assistance capabilities.

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ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

Source: The Scoop

• Brunei completes 10 liver transplants, expanding access to specialist care (2026-10-24 17:24)

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN – Brunei has completed 10 living donor liver transplants since launching its local programme in February 2025, marking a milestone in the country’s ability to deliver specialised treatment. Led by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in collaboration with Jerudong Park Medical Centre (JPMC), the programme allows patients to undergo liver transplantation in-country, with local doctors working alongside visiting specialists throughout the treatment process. Dr Taufique Ahmed, lead of the Liver Transplant Programme, said an estimated 60% to 70% of patients who underwent transplants in Brunei would previously have been unable to receive the treatment because they were too unwell to travel overseas or faced other clinical challenges. Before the programme was established, MOH typically sent only one or two patients abroad for liver transplants per year. What the milestone means for patients A living donor liver transplant is possible because of the liver’s unique ability to regenerate. During the procedure, a healthy person has a portion of their liver surgically removed and transplanted into a recipient to replace their diseased liver. Within a couple of months, the liver pieces in both the donor and the recipient regrow to normal size and take over typical function. Having a […] This story 'Brunei completes 10 liver transplants, expanding access to specialist care' appeared first on The Scoop.