

BRUNEI SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: November 01, 2026 - November 08, 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.

Security Analysis Report: Brunei Darussalam (November 01 - November 08, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of November 1 to November 8, 2026, Brunei Darussalam demonstrated a proactive and multifaceted approach to its national and regional security. Key developments included significant diplomatic engagements, such as elevating relations with Oman to a Strategic Partnership and preparing for a state visit to Russia, underscoring Brunei's commitment to diverse international ties. Regionally, Brunei actively participated in counter-terrorism and maritime security forums, while also advancing its defense capabilities with the impending delivery of new military helicopters. Internal security efforts focused on combating immigration offenses and activities deemed prejudicial to national security. Overall, Brunei maintained a stable security posture, characterized by robust regional cooperation and a strategic balancing act amidst evolving geopolitical dynamics.

Key Security Developments

- Diplomatic Elevation with Oman

From November 2 to November 4, 2026, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah hosted His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik of Oman for a historic state visit in Brunei Darussalam. This visit culminated in the elevation of relations between the two nations to a Strategic Partnership, signifying a deepened commitment to bilateral cooperation across various sectors. This strategic alignment enhances Brunei's diplomatic reach and strengthens its ties with a key Middle Eastern partner.

- Preparations for Sultan's Visit to Russia

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei is scheduled to visit Russia in November 2026, an announcement made on October 2, 2026. This visit aims to deepen formal ties and expand the cooperative framework between the two countries, building upon 35 years of diplomatic relations. The engagement with Russia highlights Brunei's strategy of diversifying its international partnerships beyond traditional Western and regional allies.

• Engagement in Regional Counter-Terrorism Efforts

On November 7, 2026, Brunei Darussalam's delegation, led by the Coordinating Minister for National Security, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, and Minister of Defence II, participated in the 7th Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (SRM) in Jakarta, Indonesia. During this meeting, Brunei emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in addressing terrorism and violent extremism. Furthermore, Brunei and Malaysia are set to co-chair the Senior Officials' Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum under the SRM in 2027, indicating a leading role in future regional counter-terrorism initiatives.

• Advancements in Cybersecurity Dialogue

The CySec 2026 conference was underway in Brunei during this period, focusing on "Protecting critical infrastructure in an age of escalating threat." This flagship cybersecurity conference brought together government, industry, and defenders to discuss building resilience into critical infrastructure. On November 7, 2026, during a courtesy call with Australia's Minister for Home Affairs, Brunei's Coordinating Minister for National Security also discussed strengthening cooperation on cybersecurity and border security. These events underscore Brunei's proactive stance on enhancing its cyber defenses and fostering international collaboration in this critical domain.

• Defense Acquisition Milestone: H145M Helicopters

The delivery of the first batch of Airbus H145M helicopters to Brunei Darussalam is scheduled for November 2026. This follows the signing of the Customer Acceptance Test (CAT) certificate by the Ministry of Defence Brunei Darussalam in October 2026 at Airbus Helicopters Deutschland in Donauwörth. This acquisition represents a significant step in the modernization of the Royal Brunei Air Force's capabilities, enhancing its operational readiness and utility for various missions.

• Strengthening Military Ties with Singapore

The Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) hosted a delegation from the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) for the Sergeant Major Exchange Programme (SMEP) 2026 from November 4 to November 6, 2026, in Bandar Seri Begawan. This program aims to foster professional development and strengthen the longstanding defense relationship between the two nations. This exchange is part of ongoing efforts to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding.

• Internal Security Operations Against Immigration Offenses

On November 8, 2026, it was reported that Brunei's Immigration and National Registration Department (INRD) detained two foreign nationals in separate "Operasi Kakas 2026" raids in September 2026. One individual was detained for entering the country without passing through a designated checkpoint, and another for working in a role different from that stated in his passport. These operations highlight Brunei's continuous efforts to curb immigration offenses and maintain border integrity.

- Detentions for Activities Prejudicial to National Security

On November 3, 2026, news outlets reported that the Brunei Internal Security Department (ISD) had issued detention orders against six local nationals under Section 3(1)(a) of the Internal Security Act (Chapter 133) for activities deemed prejudicial to national security. Investigations revealed that two individuals were operating as unregistered freelance agents and allegedly conspired with four officers from the Immigration and National Registration Department (INRD) to assist foreign nationals in evading legal action for overstaying or possessing invalid travel documents. This incident underscores the government's vigilance against internal threats and corruption that could undermine national security.

- Reaffirmation of South China Sea Stance

On November 2, 2026, Brunei Darussalam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement reaffirming its commitment to the maintenance of peace, stability, and security in the South China Sea. The statement recalled the obligations of State Parties to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and stressed the importance of working towards an early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC). This reiterates Brunei's consistent approach of "quiet diplomacy" and adherence to international law in addressing its territorial claims.

- Exploration of Expanded Defense Cooperation with the Philippines

On October 28, 2026, on the sidelines of the 20th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in Cebu, Philippines, Brunei's Second Minister of Defense discussed initiatives with the Philippine Defense Secretary to expand defense cooperation. These initiatives include naval engagements, air force training and exchanges, and interactions among junior military personnel, aiming to improve military operational proficiency and familiarize armed forces with different operating environments.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Brunei's security developments during this period reflect its consistent foreign policy of maintaining broad diplomatic ties and actively participating in regional security frameworks, while carefully navigating great power rivalries. The elevation of relations with Oman to a Strategic Partnership and the impending state visit to Russia demonstrate Brunei's intent to diversify its international engagements beyond its traditional partners, fostering economic and security cooperation with a wider array of nations. This approach aligns with its "friend to all" foreign policy, which aims to avoid controversy and ensure stability.

In the context of the South China Sea, Brunei continues its strategy of "quiet diplomacy," reaffirming its commitment to peace, stability, and international law, particularly UNCLOS. While Brunei has territorial claims in the disputed waters, it has historically maintained a low profile, avoiding direct confrontation. This stance is crucial for regional stability, as heightened tensions in the South China Sea, as highlighted by discussions at the 20th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) in Cebu, could have significant implications for all claimant states. Brunei's active participation in ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the ADMM and the Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter Terrorism, reinforces its role in promoting regional security cooperation and multilateralism.

Brunei's engagement with major powers like China and the United States continues to be a delicate balancing act. While Brunei deepens economic ties with China, it also maintains robust defense relations with the U.S. through joint military exercises like CARAT. The reaffirmation of defense ties with China, as reported on November 2, 2026, alongside discussions on expanding defense cooperation with the Philippines, showcases Brunei's efforts to maintain strategic flexibility. The ongoing CySec 2026 conference and discussions on cybersecurity cooperation with Australia further illustrate Brunei's recognition of evolving threats and its commitment to regional collaboration in new security domains.

Military and Defense Analysis

Brunei's military and defense posture during this period reflects a continued focus on modernization and enhancing interoperability through strategic partnerships. The impending delivery of the first batch of Airbus H145M helicopters in November 2026 marks a significant upgrade for the Royal Brunei Air Force, improving its capabilities for various missions, including surveillance, search and rescue, and transport. This acquisition underscores Brunei's commitment to investing in modern defense assets, despite its relatively small military size.

The Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) actively participated in several bilateral and multilateral exercises and exchange programs. The Sergeant Major Exchange Programme (SMEP) 2026 with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) from November 4-6, 2026, in Bandar Seri Begawan, highlights ongoing efforts to strengthen professional ties and share best practices with regional partners. While not within the immediate reporting period, the successful completion of CARAT Brunei 2026 with the U.S. in September 2026 and SEACAT 2026 in August 2026, as well as the launch of Exercise Vanguard with the Republic of Singapore Air Force in October 2026, demonstrate Brunei's consistent engagement in joint training initiatives. These exercises are crucial for enhancing maritime domain awareness, improving operational interoperability, and building collective security capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region.

Defense spending trends, while not explicitly detailed in the recent news, are implicitly supported by the acquisition of new helicopters and continuous participation in international exercises. Brunei's defense policy emphasizes maintaining a well-trained and equipped force capable of safeguarding its sovereignty and contributing to regional stability. The exploration of expanded defense cooperation with the Philippines, including naval engagements and air force training, further indicates a strategic effort to bolster military-to-military relations within ASEAN, thereby strengthening collective defense capabilities against shared security challenges.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): Brunei is expected to continue its active diplomatic engagements, particularly with the Sultan's scheduled visit to Russia in November 2026, which will likely result in further bilateral cooperation agreements. The delivery of the new H145M helicopters will initiate a period of integration and training for the Royal Brunei Air Force, enhancing its operational readiness. Regionally, Brunei will maintain its focus on multilateral security cooperation, especially within ASEAN, as evidenced by its upcoming co-chairmanship of the Senior Officials' Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum in 2027. Internal security efforts will likely persist, with continued vigilance against immigration offenses and activities deemed prejudicial to national security.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The South China Sea remains a persistent, albeit low-profile, flashpoint for Brunei. While Brunei prefers "quiet diplomacy," escalating tensions or incidents involving other claimants could indirectly impact its security and economic interests, particularly concerning its hydrocarbon resources within its Exclusive Economic Zone. Transnational crime, including human trafficking and illicit trade, continues to be a concern, as highlighted by the recent detentions related to immigration offenses. Cybersecurity threats are also a growing risk, necessitating sustained investment and international collaboration, as emphasized by the CySec 2026 conference. Geopolitical competition between major powers in the Indo-Pacific could also present challenges to Brunei's balanced foreign policy.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the outcomes and follow-ups from the Sultan's visit to Russia, which could signal shifts in Brunei's foreign policy alignment. Progress on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC) will be crucial for regional maritime stability, and any significant developments in this area should be closely watched. The effectiveness of Brunei's enhanced cybersecurity measures and its collaboration with international partners in this domain will be important. Furthermore, the ongoing efforts to combat transnational crime and maintain internal security, particularly regarding immigration and corruption, will

indicate the stability of its domestic security environment.

Strategic recommendations: Brunei should continue to diversify its diplomatic and security partnerships to enhance its strategic resilience and avoid over-reliance on any single power. Investing further in maritime domain awareness and patrol capabilities is essential to protect its extensive maritime interests and uphold its claims in the South China Sea. Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure and capabilities, including public-private partnerships, is critical to safeguard national assets and critical infrastructure. Continued active participation in ASEAN-led security initiatives and forums will reinforce regional stability and provide platforms for addressing shared threats like terrorism and transnational crime. Finally, maintaining a robust internal security apparatus, coupled with efforts to promote good governance and address corruption, will be vital for long-term domestic stability.

Structured Assessment

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ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

Source: The Scoop

• XPENG makes official Brunei debut with X9, L03 AND G6, bringing a new era of intelligent mobility (2026-11-07 03:25)

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN — Brunei’s automotive market has a new name to watch, as XPENG officially makes its debut in the country with the launch of three models — the X9, L03 and G6 — bringing a different approach to how people experience mobility. Unveiled by Imperial Motors Sdn Bhd at its showroom in Katok Point on November 6, the launch marks the arrival of a brand built around intelligent technology, connectivity and electric mobility. For Bruneian motorists who have been following XPENG’s introduction to the local market, the announcement marks the opportunity to experience a new generation of automotive technology first-hand, backed by an established local automotive distributor, Imperial Motors Sdn Bhd. Three XPENG Models for a new generation of mobility XPENG X9 At the top of the line-up is the XPENG X9, a premium seven-seater electric MPV designed around space, comfort and convenience. With its futuristic design, spacious cabin and intelligent features, the X9 seven-seat configuration makes it particularly relevant for families who need room for passengers, while its premium positioning and focus on passenger comfort also make it an option for those seeking a more refined people-carrier experience. XPENG L03 The XPENG L03 introduces a more […] This story 'XPENG makes official Brunei debut with X9, L03 AND G6, bringing a new era of intelligent mobility' appeared first on The Scoop.