



BRUNEI SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: June 22, 2026 - June 29, 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.

Executive Summary

Brunei Darussalam maintained an active security and diplomatic posture from June 22 to June 29, 2026, engaging in significant military exercises, regional diplomatic visits, and robust internal security operations. The Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) participated in a bilateral exercise with Australia and announced upcoming live firing drills, while the Royal Brunei Navy (RBN) strengthened maritime ties through introductory visits to the Philippines and Indonesia. Concurrently, Brunei co-chaired a sub-regional counter-terrorism forum, highlighting its commitment to combating extremist ideologies, and intensified efforts against cyber scams and illegal immigration. These developments underscore Brunei's focus on enhancing defense capabilities, fostering regional stability, and safeguarding national security against both traditional and non-traditional threats.

Key Security Developments

- Military Activities and Exercises

The Royal Brunei Land Force (RBLF) commenced Exercise MALLEE BULL with the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) in Townsville, Queensland, Australia, on June 25, 2026. This exercise, involving three officers and 37 personnel from the First Battalion RBLF, is scheduled to run until July 3, 2026, and aims to enhance interoperability between the two forces.

The Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) announced on June 23, 2026, that it will conduct live firing exercises throughout July, August, and September 2026. These exercises will take place at the Binturan Firing Range in Tutong District, including a danger zone within 4 kilometers from the coast, and the Shooting Range Gallery in Bangar Camp, Temburong District, with the public strictly prohibited from approaching these areas.

- Defense Policy and Strategic Shifts

Brunei's defense spending has seen a substantial upward trend, with the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 budget cycles prioritizing military modernization. The annual defense budget is approximately \$560 million, representing about 3.7% of GDP, directed towards enhancing Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities and modernizing infrastructure. Recent strategic shifts, announced in early June 2026, include the establishment of a Special Operations Command and a Combined Arms Training Centre (PULGAT), integrating all training

branches for operational competency under a single command, aligning with the Defence White Paper Update 2026 and Force 2035 initiative.

- Diplomatic Relations

First Admiral Sahibul Bahari bin Haji Zainal Abidin, Commander of the Royal Brunei Navy (RBN), conducted official introductory visits to the Philippine Navy in Manila on June 22, 2026, and the Indonesian Navy in Jakarta on June 24, 2026. These visits reaffirmed Brunei's commitment to strengthening bilateral defense and maritime cooperation, particularly in maritime security, humanitarian assistance, disaster response, and naval interoperability.

The Chief of the Defence Force of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, General Ukris Boontanondha, made an introductory visit to Brunei Darussalam from June 25-27, 2026. During his visit, he met with the Commander of the RBAF and the Minister of Defence II, reaffirming commitment to consistent military cooperation and exploring new opportunities for enhanced bilateral defense relations.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah attended the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit in Kazan, Russia, on June 20, 2026, where he emphasized the vital role of ASEAN-Russia cooperation in strengthening collective resilience and advancing peace, stability, and prosperity in areas such as energy and food security, climate action, disaster management, and non-traditional security challenges.

- Security Incidents and Threats

The Brunei Immigration and National Registration Department conducted "Operasi Kakas" on June 25-26, 2026, in Mukim Mentiri and Mukim Berakas 'B'. These operations resulted in the arrest of seven foreign nationals suspected of violating immigration laws, including overstaying, working for unauthorized employers, or engaging in illegal work with visitor passes.

In a related development from March 2026, the Brunei Internal Security Department (ISD) issued detention orders against six local nationals for activities deemed prejudicial to national security, involving conspiracy with immigration officers to assist foreign nationals in evading legal action for immigration offenses.

- Cybersecurity

On June 28, 2026, the Cyber Crime Investigation Unit of the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) delivered a briefing on 'Online Scams' during the Retirement Preparation Course at the Civil Service Institute. The briefing highlighted the threats of online scams and advised participants on steps to take when encountering suspicious information, urging them to report incidents via the Online Scam Hotline 16993. Brunei has also been actively blocking fraudulent websites and phone numbers, with 82 websites and 557 phone numbers blocked since 2024, as part of its ongoing efforts to combat cyber threats.

- Maritime and Border Security

Brunei, as one of the four ASEAN member states with overlapping claims in the South China Sea, remains committed to the maintenance of peace, stability, and security in the region. The Philippines, as the current ASEAN chair, has prioritized the conclusion of a legally binding Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea in 2026, a development that directly involves Brunei's strategic maritime interests. Brunei also underscored the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UNCLOS.

- Counter-terrorism

Brunei Darussalam and Thailand co-chaired the 5th Sub-Regional Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum (SOCTPF) in Bangkok on June 25, 2026. The forum brought together senior officials from eight countries to discuss emerging trends in the online dissemination of extremist ideologies and the evolving terrorist threat landscape. Brunei presented a concept paper on a proposed sub-regional framework for assessing public sentiment towards extremist and terrorist ideologies spread through online platforms.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Brunei's security developments during this period reflect a strategic alignment with its long-standing foreign policy principles of neutrality, regional cooperation, and adherence to international law. The active diplomatic engagements, particularly the RBN Commander's visits to the Philippines and Indonesia and the Thai Chief of Defence Force's visit to Brunei, underscore a concerted effort to strengthen bilateral military ties and enhance maritime security cooperation within ASEAN. These interactions contribute to regional stability by fostering trust and interoperability among Southeast Asian nations, crucial for addressing shared maritime challenges and non-traditional threats.

The Sultan's participation in the ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit in Kazan highlights Brunei's balanced approach to major powers, seeking to leverage cooperation in areas like energy security and disaster management, which are vital for national and regional resilience. This engagement signals Brunei's recognition of Russia's role in the broader Eurasian security architecture and its commitment to a diversified diplomatic portfolio. Concurrently, Brunei's consistent reaffirmation of the 1982 UNCLOS and its support for a legally binding Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, as championed by the Philippines, positions it as a proponent of rules-based order amidst complex territorial disputes.

The ongoing concerns regarding the Strait of Hormuz, though not a direct event in the reporting period, continue to shape Brunei's diplomatic discourse, as evidenced by its

earlier statement welcoming the US-Iran agreement. This demonstrates Brunei's awareness of global flashpoints and their potential impact on international trade and energy supply chains, which are critical for its oil-dependent economy. The co-chairmanship of the Sub-Regional Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum further solidifies Brunei's role in regional security architecture, particularly in addressing the evolving threat of online radicalization and violent extremism, thereby contributing to the broader strategic landscape of Southeast Asia.

Military and Defense Analysis

Brunei's military and defense posture is characterized by a sustained commitment to modernization and capability enhancement, despite its relatively small size. The defense budget for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 shows a significant upward trend, with an annual expenditure of approximately \$560 million, representing about 3.7% of the nation's GDP. This substantial investment is primarily directed towards improving Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities, modernizing infrastructure, and procuring advanced maritime surveillance technologies and unmanned systems to compensate for limited personnel numbers.

Recent strategic initiatives, such as the establishment of a Special Operations Command and a Combined Arms Training Centre (PULGAT) in early June 2026, indicate a move towards more integrated and specialized forces. These developments, outlined in the Defence White Paper Update 2026 and the Force 2035 initiative, aim to enhance the Royal Brunei Armed Forces' (RBAF) operational competency and credibility. The ongoing participation in bilateral exercises, such as Exercise MALLEE BULL with Australia, further demonstrates Brunei's commitment to enhancing interoperability and readiness with regional partners. The RBAF maintains a force of 7,200 active military personnel and 700 reserves, operating 26 military aircraft. The focus on advanced maritime assets and surveillance is particularly pertinent given Brunei's maritime claims in the South China Sea and its reliance on sea lanes for trade.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): Brunei is expected to continue its active engagement in regional military exercises, as evidenced by the announced RBAF live firing drills throughout July, August, and September 2026. Diplomatic efforts to strengthen bilateral defense ties within ASEAN, particularly with the Philippines and Indonesia, are likely to persist, building on the recent RBN Commander's visits. Brunei will also

likely maintain its focus on internal security, with continued operations against illegal immigration and heightened public awareness campaigns on cybersecurity threats. The country is also preparing to host the 6th Sub-Regional Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum in 2027, indicating sustained leadership in regional counter-terrorism efforts.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The South China Sea remains a critical flashpoint, with ongoing territorial disputes and the complex negotiations for a Code of Conduct (COC). While Brunei advocates for peaceful resolution and adherence to international law, the broader geopolitical dynamics and actions of other claimants, particularly China, could escalate tensions. Internally, the threat of cybercrime and online scams remains elevated, requiring continuous vigilance and adaptation of cybersecurity measures. The potential for illegal immigration and associated criminal activities, as highlighted by the "Operasi Kakas" raids and earlier internal security detentions, poses an ongoing risk to national security and border integrity.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators to monitor include the progress of the South China Sea Code of Conduct negotiations, particularly any shifts in the positions of claimant states or China. The frequency and scope of bilateral and multilateral military exercises involving Brunei will indicate the depth of its defense partnerships. Domestically, the effectiveness of cybersecurity initiatives and the rate of reported online scams will be crucial. Furthermore, any significant changes in defense spending allocations or new defense acquisition announcements would signal shifts in Brunei's long-term security strategy.

Strategic recommendations: Brunei should continue to proactively engage in multilateral forums like ASEAN to advocate for a rules-based international order, particularly concerning maritime disputes. Investing further in cyber defense capabilities and public education campaigns is essential to counter evolving online threats. Strengthening border security measures and inter-agency cooperation is vital to address illegal immigration and prevent associated transnational crimes. Finally, maintaining a balanced diplomatic approach with major global powers while prioritizing regional partnerships will be key to navigating the complex geopolitical landscape and safeguarding Brunei's national interests.

Structured Assessment

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## ANNEX: COLLECTED ARTICLES BY SOURCE

### Source: The Scoop

- [1 million kilometres? No problem for these Toyota owners](#) (2026-06-22 16:07)

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN – NBT Toyota Brunei has proudly concluded the “Highest Mileage Challenge, a nationwide customer celebration that brought together more than 700 passionate Toyota owners across NBT’s Gadong, Beribi and Belait branches. Far beyond a campaign, this initiative became a celebration of journeys lived — where Toyota owners arrived not just with their vehicles, but with decades of memories, milestones, and meaningful moments built kilometre by kilometre. Across all three branches, the atmosphere was vibrant as customers proudly displayed their vehicles from different generations, captured photos, swapped stories, and submitted their mileage records — each one representing a journey worth sharing. One of the highlights of the campaign was a vehicle that recorded close to one million kilometres — a testament to Toyota’s legendary durability, engineering excellence, and long-standing reputation for reliability. Three weeks, three winners Over the three-week challenge period, excitement continued to build as a weekly winner emerged. Each week crowned a Top Mileage Champion, who drove away with a B\$1,000 cash prize. Another 10 lucky customers were surprised with rewards, including shopping vouchers worth up to B\$B200, adding even more excitement to an already unforgettable challenge. But beyond the prizes, the real reward was connecting [...] This story '1 million kilometres? No problem for these Toyota owners' appeared first on The Scoop.