

BRUNEI SECURITY ANALYSIS REPORT

AI-Assisted Open Source Intelligence Assessment

Analysis Period: October 30, 2026 - November 06, 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 (October 30, 2026 - November 06, 2026)

Executive Summary

During the period of October 30 to November 06, 2026, Brunei Darussalam demonstrated a proactive and engaged approach to its national and regional security, marked by significant diplomatic advancements and continued emphasis on cybersecurity and counter-terrorism efforts. A key development was the elevation of bilateral relations with Oman to a Strategic Partnership, underscoring Brunei's active diplomacy. Domestically, cybersecurity remained a critical focus, with ongoing initiatives to strengthen national digital defenses and combat online fraud. Regionally, Brunei actively participated in multilateral forums addressing counter-terrorism and food security, reaffirming its commitment to collective stability. While no major security incidents were reported, the nation continued to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics, balancing relations with major powers and modernizing its defense capabilities.

Key Security Developments

- Diplomatic Relations Elevated with Oman

On November 4, 2026, Brunei Darussalam and Oman elevated their bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership during the State Visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik of Oman to Brunei. This historic development, the first state visit by an Omani Sultan to Brunei, was marked by the signing of a joint declaration and five agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) covering mutual visa exemption, labor, health, agriculture, fisheries, economy, and strategic planning. The move signifies a deepening of ties and a commitment to enhanced cooperation across various sectors, with both leaders exchanging views on regional and international developments, including Middle East tensions.

- Participation in 7th Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (SRM)

Brunei Darussalam's delegation, led by Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister of Defence II, Yang Berhormat Pehin Datu Lailaraja Major General (Rtd) Dato

Paduka Seri Awang Haji Halbi bin Haji Mohd Yussof, participated in the 7th Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (SRM) in Jakarta, Indonesia, on November 1, 2026. Discussions focused on regional and global security challenges, including terrorism, irregular migration, cybersecurity, and transnational crime. Brunei and Malaysia are set to co-chair the Senior Officials' Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum under the SRM next year, and Brunei's ranking in the United States Trafficking in Persons Report was upgraded to Tier 2.

- Recognition in Cybersecurity Resilience

On October 28, 2026, Yang Mulia Shamsul Bahri Haji Kamis, Interim Commissioner of Cyber Security Brunei (CSB), received the AJCCA Cyber Resilience Award (ACRA) 2026 at the 3rd ASEAN-Japan Cybersecurity Conference in Bangkok, Thailand. This award acknowledges his leadership in strengthening Brunei's cybersecurity posture, enhancing cyber resilience and incident preparedness, and fostering regional collaboration. This highlights Brunei's ongoing commitment to improving its digital defenses and contributing to regional cybersecurity efforts.

- Continued Focus on National Cybersecurity Initiatives

Brunei is intensifying its national cybersecurity efforts to protect digital systems and combat online scams and digital fraud. Cyber Security Brunei (CSB) is preparing new guidelines for Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) owners, including Operational Technology Security Guidelines and Cloud Security Policy Guidelines. The nation is also working on introducing a Next-Generation Security Intel (NSI) platform to strengthen monitoring and oversight capabilities. These measures, discussed at the 21st Legislative Council Session on October 24, 2026, emphasize cybersecurity as a shared social responsibility.

- Reaffirmation of Commitment to Regional Food Security

Brunei Darussalam reaffirmed its commitment to regional food security, resilience, and sustainable agriculture at the 48th ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) Meeting in Singapore on November 4, 2026. Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Dato Seri Setia Dr Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin highlighted Brunei's strategic shift towards becoming a net exporter of agri-food and aquaculture products through modern agro-technology and enhanced trade partnerships.

- Defence White Paper Update 2026 and Force Modernisation

The Defence White Paper Update 2026 reinforces the Royal Brunei Armed Forces' (RBAF) emphasis on building a credible, integrated, and future-ready force. This strategic direction, aligned with the Force 2035 initiative, includes strengthening joint force integration across land, air, and maritime domains. Recent modernization efforts include the establishment of the Special Operations Command (May 31, 2026) to coordinate special operations and the Combined Arms Training Centre (PULGAT) for

the Royal Brunei Land Force.

- Defense Acquisitions for Air Force Capability Enhancement

The Royal Brunei Air Force (RBAirF) is set to receive the first batch of H145M multi-role helicopters from Airbus Defence and Space, with the deal for six helicopters signed in May 2024. These helicopters, expected early next year, will replace retired Bolkow BO105 helicopters and significantly enhance the RBAF's operational capabilities for missions such as close air support, aerial observation, and other operations.

- Active Participation in Regional Maritime Security Exercises

Brunei has consistently participated in multilateral maritime security exercises, including SEACAT 2025 (concluded September 19, 2025) and SEACAT 2026 (August 13, 2026), reinforcing efforts among Indo-Pacific partners to address shared maritime security challenges. These exercises enhance interoperability and coordination in tracking and intercepting vessels of interest in Southeast Asian waters. Furthermore, Brunei participated in CARAT Brunei 2026 with the U.S. (September 14, 2026), focusing on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.

- Engagement in Counter-Piracy and Cross-Border Security Discussions

The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) and the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF), along with the National Maritime Coordination Centre, concluded a cluster meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan from September 21 to 24, 2026. The meeting focused on port and maritime security, including early detection and response to threats, emerging technologies, and enhancing offshore energy security. Participants discussed the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in counter-piracy and cross-border security operations.

- Bilateral Military Exercises with the United States

Brunei continued its robust defense ties with the United States through various exercises. Exercise Pahlawan Warrior 26 (August 11-21, 2026) involved U.S. Army Pacific and Royal Brunei Land Forces in jungle training, cyber defense, and medical operations at Tutong Camp. Additionally, PACIFIC ANGEL 26-1 (August 25 - September 5, 2026) saw the U.S. Pacific Air Forces and Royal Brunei Air Force conduct search and rescue exercises at Rimba Air Base, enhancing interoperability in regional contingencies.

Geopolitical Impact and Regional Dynamics

Brunei's security developments during this period underscore its consistent foreign policy of hedging between major powers, particularly the United States and China, while prioritizing ASEAN centrality. The elevation of ties with Oman to a Strategic Partnership demonstrates Brunei's efforts to diversify its diplomatic engagements

beyond traditional partners and regional blocs, potentially enhancing its influence in the broader Islamic world and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) relations. This strategic move aligns with Brunei's long-standing conservative, sovereignty-first foreign policy aimed at protecting regime continuity and economic interests.

The active participation in regional forums like the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and the Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (SRM) highlights Brunei's commitment to multilateralism and collective security in Southeast Asia. By co-chairing future counter-terrorism forums and presenting concept papers on online extremism, Brunei positions itself as a constructive actor in addressing non-traditional threats. These engagements contribute to regional stability by fostering cooperation and information sharing among member states.

Brunei's ongoing military exercises with the United States (CARAT, Pahlawan Warrior, PACIFIC ANGEL) reinforce its defense ties with Washington, a crucial aspect of its balancing act amidst intensifying strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific. While economically deepening ties with China through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the development of Muara Port, Brunei maintains robust defense cooperation with the U.S. to ensure security and stability. This hedging strategy allows Brunei to navigate the complexities of great power rivalry, ensuring both economic growth and security without overcommitting to either side. Brunei's historically low-profile stance on its South China Sea claims remains a key element of its foreign policy, aimed at avoiding direct confrontation despite being a claimant state.

Military and Defense Analysis

The Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) continues its modernization trajectory, guided by the Defence White Paper Update 2026 and the Force 2035 initiative. The focus is on developing a credible, integrated, and future-ready force capable of responding to an increasingly complex security environment. A significant organizational change was the establishment of the Special Operations Command on May 31, 2026, designed to centralize command and control for special operations across the RBAF's various special forces units. This move aims to enhance operational effectiveness and alignment with regional and global geopolitical developments.

Capability development is evident in the Royal Brunei Land Force's new Combined Arms Training Centre (PULGAT), which integrates all branches of training for operational competency under a single command. For the Royal Brunei Air Force, the upcoming delivery of H145M multi-role helicopters will significantly upgrade its aerial capabilities, supporting a broad range of missions including close air support and aerial observation. Furthermore, the Joint Force Headquarters of the RBAF is expected

to commission an upgraded Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) system early next year, which will enhance situational awareness and decision-making.

Brunei's defense spending trends, while not explicitly detailed in the recent news, are implicitly geared towards these modernization programs and maintaining a robust defense posture. The nation's participation in numerous bilateral and multilateral exercises, such as CARAT, Pahlawan Warrior, PACIFIC ANGEL, SEACAT, and ADMM-Plus EWG exercises, demonstrates a commitment to enhancing interoperability and readiness with regional and international partners. These exercises cover a wide spectrum of operations, including maritime security, jungle warfare, search and rescue, and cybersecurity, indicating a comprehensive approach to capability development and defense diplomacy.

Outlook and Forecast

Short-term trends (1-3 months): Brunei is expected to continue its active diplomatic engagements, particularly within ASEAN and with its new Strategic Partner, Oman. The focus on cybersecurity will likely intensify, with further implementation of new guidelines for Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) and the development of the Next-Generation Security Intel (NSI) platform. Regional counter-terrorism and transnational crime cooperation will remain a priority, especially as Brunei prepares to co-chair the Senior Officials' Counter-Terrorism Policy Forum. Military modernization efforts, including the integration of new units and the C4ISR system, will proceed as planned.

Critical flashpoints and risk areas: The primary external risk remains the South China Sea disputes, where Brunei's low-profile approach could be challenged by escalating tensions among other claimants or major powers. While Brunei has no recent history of homegrown terrorism, the broader regional threat of transnational terrorism and extremist ideologies, particularly online, necessitates continuous vigilance. Cybersecurity threats, including online scams and potential attacks on critical infrastructure, represent a persistent internal and transnational risk. Economic diversification efforts, while progressing, will need to be sustained to reduce reliance on hydrocarbons, which indirectly impacts defense spending capabilities.

Indicators to monitor: Key indicators include the progress of Brunei's cybersecurity initiatives, particularly the rollout of new guidelines and the NSI platform, and the effectiveness of its multi-agency fact-checking platform, Waspada.BN. Monitoring the outcomes of regional counter-terrorism forums and Brunei's role in them will be crucial. Developments in the South China Sea, including freedom-of-navigation operations and any shifts in other claimants' postures, should be closely watched for

potential indirect impacts on Brunei's maritime security. The pace of military modernization and defense acquisitions, especially the integration of new helicopters and C4ISR systems, will indicate the RBAF's evolving capabilities.

Strategic recommendations: Brunei should continue to leverage its ASEAN centrality and diplomatic agility to foster regional stability and address shared security challenges. Strengthening cybersecurity resilience through international partnerships and public-private collaboration is paramount to protect critical infrastructure and combat digital threats. Maintaining a balanced foreign policy that hedges between major powers, while actively engaging in defense diplomacy and multilateral exercises, will be essential for preserving strategic autonomy. Furthermore, continued investment in maritime domain awareness and capabilities is vital given its extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and reliance on offshore resources.

Structured Assessment

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