



Integrated Country Strategy

Brunei Darussalam

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1. Chief of Mission Priorities

The United States can boast one of the nation's longest standing diplomatic relationships dating back to 1850, when we signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, which is still in effect today. As a small and traditional Islamic monarchy, Brunei's external affairs –including with the United States– are limited by capacity, size, and a “friend to all” foreign policy approach aimed at avoiding controversy. However, ample opportunities exist to strengthen and build upon our current bilateral ties.

Mission Bandar Seri Begawan will focus on further strengthening security ties, particularly those related to military-to-military cooperation, by expanding defense cooperation across all military services and targeting maritime security challenges as an area of mutual interest. We will enhance our bilateral information sharing to ensure Brunei meets the necessary requirements to remain in the Visa Waiver Program. Brunei's economy is projected to grow by 3.28 percent in 2022, reversing several years of decline due to low hydrocarbon prices. This economic rebound may offer new opportunities for the sale of military equipment and increase opportunities for Brunei to participate in regional security forums and exercises.

We will aim to develop a more robust bilateral economic relationship by supporting Brunei's efforts to diversify its oil-and-gas-dependent economy. The United States has a trade surplus with the Sultanate, and we will continue efforts to develop a trade and investment framework that is free, fair, and helps promote U.S. goods and services. In addition, we look forward to sharing U.S. expertise with Brunei on a wide array of sectors including oil and gas, entrepreneurship, agriculture, and environmental stewardship.

We will bolster our people-to-people ties by establishing partnerships with civil society to tackle issues like climate change, women's empowerment, LGBTGI+ rights, press freedoms, social inclusion, and entrepreneurship. At the same time, we will increase awareness of and favorability towards U.S. culture and institutions through exchanges, cultivation of a robust alumni network, and promotion of higher education opportunities.

Given China's excessive territorial claims in the South China Sea, we will work with Brunei to promote peaceful dispute resolution and respect for international law and sovereignty. We will encourage Brunei to support our initiatives to strengthen regional institutions and programs, especially those that strengthen ASEAN. We want Brunei to become more aware and supportive of U.S. policies through increased people-to-people exchanges and access to Embassy programs.

Finally, to keep pace with our ambitious goals and priorities, the Management section will continue to improve workplace performance, efficiency, and accountability. We will review our physical infrastructure to ensure USG facilities provide a safe, secure, and environmentally conscious working space for all staff. We will build the technology and resources necessary to effectively implement the new Indo Pacific Strategy Goals and Objectives.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Enhanced security at home and abroad through strengthened U.S.-Brunei ties.

- **Mission Objective 1.1:** Strengthen and expand the U.S.-Brunei defense relationship to develop Brunei's security capabilities and support and promote a free, open, and rules-based order in the region and beyond.
- **Mission Objective 1.2:** Assist U.S. citizens in Brunei and protect U.S. borders through bilateral information sharing.

Mission Goal 2: A resilient and diversified Bruneian economy with robust U.S.-Bruneian economic relationships.

- **Mission Objective 2.1:** Generate commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses in Brunei and/or across Borneo through free, fair, and reciprocal trade and investment.
- **Mission Objective 2.2:** Build Bruneian and/or Bornean prosperity through an internationally minded and entrepreneurial population that supports economic and environmental sustainability.

Mission Goal 3: Partner with Brunei to encourage respect for national sovereignty and peaceful dispute resolution in the Indo-Pacific region.

- **Mission Objective 3.1:** Promote security policies that include the United States and uphold national sovereignty and shared interests.

Mission Goal 4: Promote fundamental American values to advance human rights, good governance, and social inclusion while strengthening civil society.

- **Mission Objective 4.1:** Engage, encourage, and equip civil society to advocate for human rights and social inclusion, to reduce discrimination and intolerance.

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- **Mission Objective 4.2:** Promote and strengthen governance institutions and practices that are inclusive, transparent, and accountable, to boost responsiveness to citizen needs and civil society engagement.

Management Objective 1: Improve workforce performance, efficiency and effectiveness through leadership, professional development, engagement, and accountability.

Management Objective 2: Improve and expand USG facilities and infrastructure to provide safe, secure, and environmentally conscious, and efficient working and living space that meet changing USG needs in Brunei.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1 | Enhanced security at home and abroad through strengthened U.S.-Brunei ties.

Description | A stable, friendly, and prosperous Brunei will achieve National Security Strategy and State Department goals to enhance regional security and benefit our respective economies. Strengthening U.S.-Brunei ties, especially in defense, will help the U.S. lead Brunei to address shared challenges in a meaningful way and prevent, deter, and resolve conflicts in a manner that promotes international security. This effort supports the goal from the Joint Strategic Plan to address global challenges that have the greatest impact on American's security and well-being.

Objective 1.1 | Strengthen and expand the U.S.-Brunei defense relationship to develop Brunei's security capabilities and support and promote a free, open, and rules-based order in the region and beyond

- **Justification** | Brunei relies significantly on its membership in regional groupings like ASEAN. Working with Brunei can thus help influence other ASEAN members on key political and security issues. Increased Bruneian military cooperation with the United States can strengthen U.S. national security, encourage stability in a region that promotes trade and economic growth, and produce solutions to transnational regional challenges. Bilateral information sharing can increase interoperability and preparedness. Failing to engage effectively on these issues will leave the field open for actors who may pursue goals inimical to U.S. interests.
- **Linkages** | This goal supports the objectives outlined in the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, Section 1 of the State-USAID 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan, and in the EAP/Asia Joint Regional Strategy, goal 3. This goal is consistent with and supportive of the Security and Governance & Cooperation categories in the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy, specifically Section 4, Bolster Indo-Pacific Security

- **Risks** | Increased territorial disputes and aggression within the region may affect opportunities for civil engagement and economic opportunities and could act as drivers for extremist recruitment.

Objective 1.2 | Assist U.S citizens in Brunei and protect U.S. borders through bilateral information sharing.

- **Justification** | Increased security cooperation between the United States and Brunei ensures U.S. citizens and interests remain protected. Brunei has participated in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) since 1993, is the only Muslim-majority country in the program and one of only two participating countries in SE Asia.
- **Linkages** | This links directly with the FY 2022-2026 State-Aid Joint Strategic Plan, goal 5.
- **Risks** | The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) conducted a review of Brunei's participation in the VWP in May 2018 and found it deficient in several of the program's traveler screening and bilateral information sharing requirements. Brunei struggles to make progress on the VWP workplan and is behind schedule with its traveler-screening and information-sharing requirements. Brunei's continued failure to meet VWP workplan deadlines could prompt DHS to place the country's VWP participation in provisional status

Mission Goal 2 | A resilient and diversified Bruneian economy with robust U.S.-Bruneian economic relationships.

Description | Brunei's economy remains overwhelmingly dependent on the income derived from the sale of oil and gas and downstream products, which represents 98% of Brunei's total exports and 48% of the country's GDP. Post will support Brunei's diversification efforts by encouraging U.S. investment, strengthening economic competitiveness, encouraging innovation, and expanding economic opportunities for the sultanate's middle class. This effort will bolster Brunei's economic security, reinforcing it against destabilizing shocks to oil and gas price

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Objective 2.1 | Generate commercial opportunities for U.S. businesses in Brunei through free, fair, and reciprocal trade and investment.

- **Justification** | Commercial engagement with Brunei facilitates Bruneian investment into the United States and provides opportunities for U.S. companies to sell products and services. Brunei is strategically located near the geographic center of ASEAN, an increasingly integrated region with a growing middle class. Expanded commercial ties also broaden Bruneian exposure to U.S. laws, norms, and values. As Brunei continues to diversify its economy, U.S. companies will have new opportunities to do business.
- **Linkages** | This mission goal reflects the 2021 interim National Security Strategy priorities of expanding economic prosperity in such a way that advances mutual interests and supporting investments that encourage innovation and competitiveness. It also supports goals 2 and 3 of the in the State-USAID 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan, Goal#2 by securing commercial opportunities and economic partnerships, while advancing goal 4 of the EAP/ASIA Joint Regional Strategy, which focuses on ensuring sustained and inclusive socioeconomic growth through high-standard investment, reciprocal trading relationships business opportunities. Consistent with the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Mission will support an economic framework that harnesses rapid technological transformation and adapts to clean energy transition.
- **Risks** | Private U.S. companies may not be interested in navigating Brunei's regulatory obstacles, Sharia-based policies, and absorbing the cost of entry into Brunei's small market.

Objective 2.2 | Build regional prosperity through an internationally minded and entrepreneurial population that supports economic and environmental sustainability.

- **Justification** | Travel and study to the United States increases Bruneians' understanding of the people, culture, values, and policies. Brunei's hydrocarbon-dependent economy would also stand to gain from U.S. technology and ideas, particularly in clean energy and the ocean economy. The Mission will help the sultanate leverage its natural resources

and central location to implement new, sustainable technologies and grow its economy, despite the geopolitical constraints they face.

- **Linkages** | This directly links with the 2022-2026 State-Aid Joint Strategic Plan Framework, goal 1.
- **Risks** | Though Brunei's youth are well-educated and open-minded, youth unemployment remains high and opportunities in the private sector few, limiting the reach the ambitious young people. Brunei also will struggle to overcome dependence on the hydrocarbons due to a lack of technical capacity and renewable energy providers. Its economic diversification depends heavily on the expansion of downstream industries associated with a PRC-linked company.

Mission Goal 3 | Partner with Brunei to promote good governance, respect for national sovereignty, and peaceful dispute resolution in the Indo-Pacific region.

Description | Brunei is an absolute monarchy. Brunei is politically stable with a top-down decision-making apparatus designed to implement and enforce the MIB or Muslim Malay monarchy governing philosophy. The Mission will continue to work with counterparts to identify opportunities to strengthen good governance by increasing participation, accountability, transparency, and inclusivity, in line with American values. Brunei is one of four claimant states in the South China Sea (SCS) and is the only claimant without an active territorial dispute. The SCS is central to Brunei's economic lifeblood as many of its hydrocarbon resources are in these waters. Brunei's support of the rule of law and the conclusion of the Code of Conduct ensures Freedom of Navigation and a rule-based system for resolving international disputes are respected.

Objective 3.1 | Promote security policies that include the United States and uphold national sovereignty and shared interests

- **Justification** | The goal reflects priorities in the 2021 interim National Security Strategy of promoting good governance, democratic progress, and rule of law. It

reinforces goals 1 and 2 of the 2022-2026 State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, offsetting PRC influence with stronger alliances, reinforcing ASEAN centrality and respect for national sovereignty, and promoting transparency and accountability. The goal also supports the 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy objectives by advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific by building rules-based approaches to the South China Sea and ensuring the region's seas and skies are governed according to international law; building connections within the region and empowering ASEAN; and prioritizing our network of security partnerships to dissuade and deter aggression that undermines the rights of sovereign nations.

- **Linkages** | This directly links with State-Aid 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Framework, Goal #2.
- **Risks** | Promoting global prosperity and upholding shared interests will create a global economy, one that will strengthen resilience to global systemic shocks, while creating opportunities for U.S. Without strengthening like-minded these ASEAN policies, the space will grow for malign actors to influence Brunei's path.

Mission Goal 4 | Promote fundamental American values to advance human rights, good governance, and social inclusion while strengthening civil society.

Description | Brunei is an absolute monarchy in which freedom of the press is severely restricted, civil society organizations are weak, marginalized groups have few avenues of expression, and familiarity with the United States is generally low. Despite these challenges, Brunei has an affluent, well-traveled citizenry with growing awareness of social concerns. Topics such as sexual harassment, the treatment of migrant workers, and poverty that would have been taboo only five years ago are in the public discourse today. This gives the Mission greater opportunity for advancing human rights and social inclusion in the interest of making Bruneian civil society more prosperous and resilient.

Objective 4.1 | Engage, encourage, and equip civil society to advocate for human rights and social inclusion, to reduce discrimination and intolerance.

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- **Justification** | Weak protections for human rights and a lack of social inclusion could create simmering unrest that would have a destabilizing effect upon Brunei in the event of a sudden succession. This would also have a detrimental economic effect, as fewer Bruneians find opportunities locally, exacerbating problems such as the lack of economic diversification and the brain drain of educated Bruneians leaving the country.
- **Linkages** | This goal supports the Performance goal 3 of the State-USAID 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan, and Section 1 of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.
- **Risks** | Current laws restrict the ability of NGOs to self-fund and organize, and the government's current Malay Islamic Monarchy philosophy prioritizes Muslim Malays over other religious and ethnic groups. This objective relies on increasing awareness of the importance of diversity and social inclusion among broader Bruneian society.

Objective 4.2 | Promote and strengthen governance institutions and practices that are inclusive, transparent, and accountable, to boost responsiveness to citizen needs, and civil society engagement.

- **Justification** | Bruneian civil society has increasingly higher expectations for good governance, partly as a result of greater GoB openness during the COVID-19 pandemic and partly because of concerns over sluggish economic diversification efforts as the country's oil reserves are depleted. This gives the Mission an opportunity to push the government towards greater transparency and inclusion, which would, in turn, galvanize greater engagement between the diverse residents of Brunei and the government.
- **Linkages** | This goal supports the Performance Goal 3 of the State-USAID 2022-2026 Joint Strategic Plan, and Section 1 of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, Advance a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.
- **Risks** | Lack of transparency and accountability will decrease the efficiency and effectiveness of our programming efforts.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1 | Improve workforce performance, efficiency, and effectiveness through leadership, professional development, engagement, and accountability.

- **Justification** | Maintaining an engaged, motivated, and well-trained work force with clear job objectives will improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Linkages** | FY200-2026 State-Aid Joint Strategic Plan, goal 4, revitalize the diplomatic and development workforce and institutions.
- **Risks** | A workforce that is not equipped with the tools and training will be less resilient and less dynamic to adapt to change. Replacing a desk position takes on average 5-7 months, hence developing existing staff remains a priority. The loss of just one LES in any one section severely limits the activities of that section.

Management Objective 2 | Improve and expand USG facilities and infrastructure to provide safe, secure, environmentally conscious, and efficient working and living space for the USG in Brunei.

- **Justification** | A secure infrastructure allows for every arriving USDH and all LE Staff to focus on the goals and objectives of the mission, while minimizing unnecessary distractions. The U.S government presence has expanded from the eight authorized positions when the embassy first opened its doors, to the current 11, which includes one PAO USDH position scheduled for a PCS arrival date in the summer/winter 2022. Post is experiencing a corresponding growth in LE staff – two new desk positions were added in 2021. With the expectations that programming will only increase, the management platform is severely limited by space and may be required to adopt a ‘tight size’ approach, which will impact morale. Change will require a balance between facility growth while preserving / expanding greening goals.

- **Linkages** FY 2022-2026 State-Aid Joint Strategic Plan, Goal 4, Protect our personnel, information, and physical infrastructure from 21st century threats.**Risks** | A lack of proper space to conduct daily tasks increases the likelihood of morale issues and limits efficiency.