



**United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors  
Office of Inspector General**

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**Inspection of Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei**

Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan management advocates energetically for U.S. policy in a predominantly Malay Islamic nation. Although there are few American businesses in Brunei, embassy management has maximized regional opportunities to promote U.S. trade and business opportunities in the country.



*Embassy Bandar  
Seri Begawan*

OIG determined that Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan is a prime candidate to transfer almost all of its administrative services to regional centers. Although there have been continual staffing problems at this isolated special embassy program (SEP) post, there is a good communications infrastructure in the region and strong regional support is available. Were the embassy's administrative services to be provided elsewhere in the region, the embassy could serve as a model for rightsizing a small mission.

There is a need to provide protection and American citizens services to the small number of Americans who live and visit Brunei, but OIG could not justify the amount of resources required to provide nonimmigrant visa services. Brunei participates in the U.S. visa waiver program, so the embassy processes only about 600 nonimmigrant visa cases per year. This workload involves mostly third-country nationals, who comprise 70 percent of visa applicants. Following September 11, 2001, every visa issuing post, no matter how small, must ensure that frequent updates to consular systems with all changes in processing and new interviewing procedures are in place. Difficulties in staffing the consular function with experienced personnel leave the embassy vulnerable to inappropriate visa adjudication. OIG recommended transferring Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan's nonimmigrant visa processing to Embassy Singapore where the immigrant visa workload is currently processed.

Although Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan is a special embassy program post that has no public affairs section, it conducts a relatively robust public diplomacy (PD) program. Its PD program is a model of the PD Partners Program, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs' program that pairs small missions with larger neighboring missions; in this case, Embassy Kuala Lumpur.

## Background



*Map of Brunei*

A Malay Islamic Sultanate, Brunei has been ruled by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah since 1967 and gained full independence from the United Kingdom in 1984. The country's oil and gas wealth enables its generally apolitical population of 380,000 to enjoy the region's highest standard of living after Singapore. Seventy percent of Bruneians are Malay Muslims, who practice Sunni Islam and enjoy generous government subsidies. Chinese – many of whom are not citizens – comprise the second largest (15 percent) ethnic group and dominate the country's small private sector. Brunei also employs more than 100,000 third-country guest workers, mostly from South Asia and from nations that are in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Brunei remains a small patch of stability in Southeast Asia, but sees itself as vulnerable to developments beyond its control, such as economic migration, social ills, and terrorism. The government recognizes the danger of transnational terrorism, condemns terrorism in all its forms, and welcomes American military and diplomatic activity in the region. There is little anti-American or anti-Western sentiment evident.

The Sultan of Brunei had his first meeting with a U.S. President at the White House on December 16, 2002. There, the Sultan and President Bush agreed to deepen the U.S.-Bruneian relationship through:

- Closer counterterrorism cooperation, including sharing of current intelligence and allowing Bruneians to take advantage of specialized training in the United States;
- Expanded trade and investment opportunities, as evidenced in the signing of a bilateral trade and investment agreement;
- Enhanced military-to-military cooperation; and
- Greater educational opportunities for Bruneians in the United States, including resumption of Brunei's participation in the Fulbright program.

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### Office of Inspector General

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