



Trump Plans to Relocate U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem by 2019

The Trump administration appears to be preparing to move the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by 2019, “despite insisting last month that the move would not happen until the end of President Trump’s term,” reported the *New York Times*. This after President Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in early December.



Talk of moving up the timeline first came via comments from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who told reporters January 17 in India that the embassy would be moved “much faster than people think, within a year from today.”

President Trump initially appeared to balk at the idea of a quick transfer of the embassy, responding to Netanyahu’s prediction by saying that Israel and the United States were “talking about different scenarios,” and that “we’re not really looking at that” timeline.

However, within 24 hours both the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Trump and Netanyahu appeared to be on the same page regarding the move.

The original plan for the move called for the construction of a new high-security embassy complex in Jerusalem, something Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had said would be completed “probably no earlier than three years out, and that’s pretty ambitious.”

However, reported the *New York Times*, “the State Department has since settled on a more modest plan to convert an existing consular building in Arnona, a neighborhood in West Jerusalem. That will reduce the cost of the project and allow Ambassador David M. Friedman and his staff to move there as early as next year.”

The *Times* added that while the building in Arnona “would need to be retrofitted for the ambassador to conduct classified operations, it is a fairly new structure with better physical security than the embassy in Tel Aviv.”

But the Associated Press reported that, according to a number of U.S. officials, the Arnona complex would serve only as an interim embassy until the permanent facility envisioned by Tillerson could be constructed in Jerusalem.

The most likely scenario, reported the AP, citing the U.S. officials, would have Ambassador Friedman and his top aides and staff moving to the temporary facility as early as April 2019, while retaining their offices in the Tel Aviv embassy. “Most embassy operations would remain in Tel Aviv in the short-term, so the annex would effectively be a satellite branch of the Tel Aviv facility,” reported the AP.

The *Jerusalem Post* noted that the Arnona consulate, which the United States has occupied since modern Israel became an independent nation in 1948, “girds the Green Line, which served as Israel’s border before the 1967 war.” The Israeli paper added that “the Palestinian Authority has ceased formal communication with the Trump administration since the Jerusalem decision.”



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