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U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem to open in May — in time for Israel's 70th anniversary

The new U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem will open in May 2018 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel declaring independence, two Trump administration officials said Friday. The State Department confirmed the timing of the move, with an official telling The Times of Israel: "We are planning to open the new U.S. Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem in May. The Embassy opening will coincide with Israel's 70th anniversary." The official said, "The Embassy will initially be located in Arnona [in south Jerusalem], on a compound that currently houses the consular operations of Consulate General Jerusalem. At least initially, it will consist of the Ambassador and a small team." A ribbon-cutting ceremony is being planned for mid-May. The May opening marks a significant acceleration. Vice President Mike Pence had said previously the embassy would open by the end of 2019. And Secretary of State Tillerson had said it could take years. The date of the move is seen as largely symbolic, as the logistics of a permanent relocation are expected to take much longer. Most of the embassy staff could continue to operate from Tel Aviv during the early stages.