

WATCH NOW: The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem Opens

The U.S. Embassy opened today, May 14, with a dedication ceremony.

"I think we're all very happy and excited to be participating in such a historic event," says Ambassador David Friedman.

"And we are extremely proud of the fact that we have been able to open the embassy, as the president likes to say, ahead of schedule and under budget. And I think it's a great testament to the skills of the White House and being able not only to—not only having the vision and the courage to make the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but then to follow through in a very cost-effective and efficient way, such that we are opening our embassy roughly four and a half months from the—or five months from the president's decision," Friedman says.

President Donald Trump announced the Israeli Embassy move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in December.

Many faith leaders praised the announcement and will meet with Friedman on Tuesday to celebrate the move.

"As faith leaders, we stand together to celebrate the move of the United States Embassy from Tel-Aviv to its rightful place in Jerusalem, a city that has represented the importance of the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people for thousands of years," says Mario Bramnick, president of the Latino Coalition for Israel.

The Friends of Zion placed 150 billboards around Jerusalem to honor Trump ahead of the embassy dedication.

"On behalf of millions of evangelicals, we want to express our

deepest gratitude to President Donald Trump and Ambassador David Friedman for their unwavering commitment and steadfast resolve to fulfill President Trump's campaign promise of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, all in the face of countless dissenting voices," Bramnick says.

Trump pledged to move the embassy during his campaign. When he officially announced the move, some people around the globe thought the proclamation would incite violence in an already-volatile area.

"We focus on the environments around us very carefully. There are people who are happy with the decision, there are people who are unhappy with the decision. I think it's far too early to be measuring reactions. In the long run, we're convinced that this decision creates an opportunity and a platform to proceed with a peace process on the basis of realities rather than fantasies, and we're fairly optimistic that this decision will ultimately create greater stability rather than less," Friedman said in an on-the-record phone call.

He continued:

One of the things that we thought was important in terms of the conflict was to look at the various leverage points and to see how we thought we could adjust those to create a better dynamic for peace. What the president saw was that the Palestinians essentially had a veto over the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, meaning that if you say we're only going to have—we're only going to recognize Jerusalem as the capital when the Palestinians say it's okay, you're empowering the leverage in a way that's not helpful. And frankly, that card has been misplayed over many years. Now, people can get unhappy about losing that leverage point in the short run, but in—at the longer run, there's also a recognition that circumstances are changing, that the world is moving ahead and people have to kind of get on board before events overtake them.

And we think that notwithstanding, again, you can't—this is a 50-plus-year conflict, maybe it's a 500-year conflict depending upon how you gauge it. You can't measure it in terms of weeks or months any more than you can measure climate change in terms of weeks and months. You have to look at the thing at a broader perspective. And so from the broader perspective, we think this is going to help stability.

In terms of potential conflicts, we look at this issue hourly. We work closely with our law enforcement and security establishments here, and our own people here in the—from the United States. And we work closely with Israeli police, with the Shin Bet, and we measure the risk of demonstrations and violence minute by minute. And so we—we're confident that we're considering all potential issues and risks, and doing everything we can to mitigate those risks and to keep people safe. ...

We will start the transition as quickly as we can. We have something like 18 acres in Arnona. There's huge capacity there to expand. There are other sites that potentially could be available to us as well. This is not going—I think there'll be interim steps, probably a good number between now and the full transition, but we're going to try to do it as efficiently and effectively as we can, and I think a lot of that is still in the works, but I don't think—this is not going to be all or nothing, where there'll be myself and a few people—and even on Day One, we're going to have more than 50 people working at the embassy because we have the consular section working on visas and passports and serving American citizens. They're all there on day one, so we're going to start off with about a 50-60 person operation, and then it will grow. The exact timing of that and the transition and how we do it we're still working on.

Friedman will preside over the dedication ceremony, and Deputy

Secretary John J. Sullivan will lead the presidential delegation to the historic opening along with Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin, Senior Adviser Jared Kushner, Adviser Ivanka Trump and Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt.

Watch the inauguration [here](#).