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Attorney General John Mitchell announced today the creation of the Office of Institutions and Facilities. Mitchell said that the new office would deal with non-criminal civil rights complaints in prisons and other institutions. He said such complaints might include segregated facilities, discriminatory hiring practices and violations of the civil rights of prison inmates, hospital patients and others. A Justice Department spokesman said that the office would intervene on behalf of inmates at a Mississippi state penitentiary who have charged that prison conditions violate a constitutional prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

The spokesman said the new unit was planned before the recent incidents at Attica State Prison in New York and, in fact, that a memo finalizing creation of the new office was coincidentally written last Thursday [9 Sep], the day that disturbances began at Attica.