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Mitchell's Morbid Look at U.S. Courts

LONDON — (UPI) — Attorney General John Mitchell told the American Bar Association today that excessive procedures, pre- and post-trial motions and appeals are "dragging justice to death in the United States."

"We face in the United States a situation where the discovery of guilt or innocence as a function of the courts is in danger of drowning in a sea of legalisms," Mitchell said.

He spoke at the second session of the ABA convention in the Grosvenor Hotel.

Mitchell said delays of up to two years between arrest and trial are not uncommon.

"It is not surprising that the New York jail riots in the fall of 1970 were blamed largely on trial delays — more than 40 percent of the inmates had waited at least a

year to be tried," Mitchell said.

"Post-trial review in America can drag on for over a dozen years, compared to the British system where criminal cases usually come to trial within 60 days and the most protracted trials are measured in days rather than weeks or months."

Mitchell, dressed in a morning suit and flanked by jurists, including Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark, said according to recent polls only 23 percent of Americans had any confidence in their legal system.