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# Ex-Haitian strongman sentenced in NYC fraud scheme

**By MARCUS FRANKLIN – 2 days ago**

NEW YORK (AP) — A former Haitian paramilitary leader was sentenced Tuesday to at least 12 years in prison for his role in a mortgage fraud scheme that cheated lenders out of $1.7 million.

Emmanuel Constant was sentenced in state Supreme Court in Brooklyn to 12 years to 37 years in prison, said state Attorney General Andrew Cuomo's office, which prosecuted the case.

Constant was found guilty of fraud and grand larceny in July. He has been jailed since 2006 for the fraud case.

An investor who testified as part of a plea deal claimed Constant offered to broker deals to buy dilapidated properties and resell them at inflated prices to so-called straw buyers who obtain mortgages for properties no one intends to occupy or pay for.

Proceeds from mortgages to the straw buyers were divvied up among the scheme's participants and the loans were never repaid, prosecutors said.

Constant, who testified in his own defense, told jurors he recruited his cousin as an investor, not a straw buyer, for a legitimate home purchase. Prosecutors said that deal was fixed.

Defense attorney Samuel Karliner didn't immediately return a telephone message Tuesday. Karliner has said that his client was forced to go to trial "for political reasons" and that he "believes he didn't do anything wrong."

Human rights groups have alleged that Constant, the son of a military officer, terrorized and slaughtered Haiti residents when he led the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti. Constant came to the U.S. in 1994 and was allowed to remain because of instability in Haiti.

The Center for Constitutional Rights lawyer Jennie Green said she was "absolutely thrilled" with the sentencing.

"The sentence sends an important message that powerful people such as Constant have to face penalties when they commit horrible crimes," she said.

*Associated Press writer Claudia Torrens contributed to this report.*

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