



<http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,1280,-4734584,00.html>

Ex-Haitian Strongman Sued Over Attacks

Saturday January 15, 2005 4:46 AM

By TOM HAYS

Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK (AP) - A former paramilitary leader from Haiti has been sued by three women who allege they were gang-raped and beaten by members of his right-wing group.

Emmanuel ``Toto" Constant, 48, was served with papers on Friday as he left an appointment with the Immigration and Naturalization Service [Immigration Services], said Moira Feeney, an attorney with the San Francisco-based Center for Justice and Accountability.

The federal lawsuit, filed by the anonymous plaintiffs in September [December], had been kept under seal so that Constant, who has kept to himself in the United States, would not try to dodge service of the papers, Feeney said. It was unclear whether he has an attorney, she added.

The suit, which seeks unspecified damages, alleges that Constant condoned a ``systematic campaign of violence against women" by his paramilitary group, the Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, or FRAPH.

The plaintiffs are Haitian women now living in the United States. Two claim they were repeatedly raped in front of family members in 1994. The third was beaten and left for dead.

The son of a military officer, Constant emerged as FRAPH's leader after Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was toppled in 1991. Human rights groups allege that between 1991 and 1994, FRAPH terrorized Aristide supporters, who were killed by the thousands.

After U.S. forces helped restore Aristide to power, Constant slipped into the United States through Puerto Rico on a tourist visa in 1994.

Then-U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned that Constant's presence in the United States would damage U.S.-Haiti relations and recommended he be deported. Five months later, INS agents captured him in the New York borough of Queens, where he lived.

Constant appealed his deportation on the grounds he would be killed if sent back to Haiti. He was released in 1996 on the condition that he not travel outside New York City and that he report regularly to the INS.

In 2000, a Haitian court sentenced Constant to life in prison following his conviction in absentia for the 1994 massacre of slum-dwellers loyal to Aristide.