**Christopher Conrad Santora**

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**Biography**

Christopher Santora is an Assistant Chief Counsel for the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Chief Counsel in Miami, Florida where he primarily works on cases involving war crimes, human rights abuses and “material support” terrorism cases within the US immigration system.  These cases involve perpetrators of atrocities or individuals who provided material support to designated terrorist organizations and who have made attempts to come to the United States and obtain relief or benefits under immigration law. They have included cases related to Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, Bangladesh and the former Yugoslavia and also several countries in West and Central Africa.

Previously, Mr. Santora worked for the United Nations "Special Court for Sierra Leone" for nearly eight years as one of the lead prosecution attorneys in cases against all of the armed factions involved in the country's eleven-year conflict.  From 2002 - 2006, Mr. Santora was one of the prosecutors in Freetown, Sierra Leone during trials against the leaders of the various armed factions. Then from 2007 - 2010 he worked as one of the lead prosecutors in the case against the former Liberian President Charles Taylor that took place in The Hague, Netherlands.  During his time at the UN tribunal, he was deeply involved in both the evidence-gathering phase and actual trial phase of these war crimes cases. This work involved extensive and frequent trips to locations throughout west Africa to meet victims, suspects and other types of witnesses or informants.

Prior to coming to the Department of Homeland Security, Christopher Santora was an Assistant District Attorney for the Rackets Bureau of the New York County District Attorney's Office from 2010 - 2016.  His area of prosecution focus is white collar and organized crime. Mr. Santora was the lead prosecutor on a major investigation into one of the largest fraudulent schemes ever against the U.S. Social Security Disability Insurance (“SSDI”) program.  The scheme was ongoing for over twenty years and involved hundreds of retired New York police and fire fighters who were coached to make claims to have psychiatric illnesses in order to fraudulently obtain SSDI.  This investigation, which included a two-year wire-tap, led to the arrest and conviction of over 135 individuals including four ring leaders who orchestrated the scheme.  The cumulative amount of the overall fraud against the SSDI program is estimated to be over $400 million.  Finally, as the lead prosecutor on this case, Mr. Santora was awarded the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association’s 2014 “National Award for Investigative Excellence.”

Prior to working at the UN Sierra Leone Tribunal, Mr. Santora worked for the US Congress as a legislative aide primarily on matters involving US criminal law and international human rights issues.  While in the US Congress, Mr. Santora worked extensively on policies related to Africa and human rights including sanctions efficacy, resource explanation, and the first legislation and multilateral agreement to prevent "conflict diamonds" known as the "Kimberly" process.

Mr. Santora graduated from George Washington University Law School in 2002.