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Animal rights activist gets 14-year jail term in U.K.

LONDON (Reuter) An animal rights activist branded dangerous and fanatical by a British judge was jailed for 14 years Monday for attacks on meat industry targets.

Keith Mann, 28, a leader of the extremist Animal Liberation Front, admitted seven offenses in connection with vandalism at an abattoir in Oldham, northern England, and the planned torching of a battery farm in Kent, southern England.

Mann was on the run for 10 months after escaping from a Manchester police station in late 1991. He was eventually tracked down to an animal sanctuary near Hastings in southern England.

Sentencing him, Judge Stephen Mitchell told Mann his attacks bore the "hallmark of terrorism" and betrayed the cause of animal welfare and rights.

"Many would say you have betrayed the cause you seek to further. These are grave offenses," the judge said.

Prosecuting counsel Anthony Gee told London's Old Bailey that ALF's objective "was to cause as much economic damage as possible to companies and individuals perceived to be abusers of animals."

ALF wrote a letter to newspapers after the abattoir attack in 1990 which was in Mann's handwriting, according to evidence given in court. When he was re-arrested in 1992 police found materials that could be used for making bombs in his bedroom.