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CENTRAL ISLIP

Acquittal in environmental terrorism case

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A federal jury yesterday rapidly acquitted a Sound Beach man of charges that he had been the head of a local group of environmental terrorists, known as the Environmental Liberation Front, or ELF. The group had claimed responsibility for a number of arsons in

Suffolk County in 2000.

Connor Cash, 22, had been charged with conspiracy, arson, and aiding terrorism for a blaze in December 2000 that damaged five homes undergoing construction in Mount Sinai and an unsuccessful scheme the same month to burn down a Center Moriches duck farm and free the animals.

The main witnesses against him were Jared McIntyre and

Matthew Rammelkamp, who pleaded guilty in the case and agreed to testify against Cash in return for leniency.

The jury in U.S. District Court in Central Islip acquitted Cash of all charges after deliberating for a few hours.

Cash's attorney, Frederick Brewington of Hempstead, had argued that the government had targeted Cash because he was

the leader of various peaceful activities on Long Island. "I'm committed to helping people," Connor said after the verdict. "I would never be involved in any violence or acts of arson."

Brewington said, "This is what democracy looks like. The government should have been ashamed of themselves for bringing this case."

Robert Nardoza, a spokes-

man for the U.S. Attorney's office, said, "The jury has ruled and we respect the verdict."

The courtroom was regularly filled with Cash's supporters and family during the weeklong trial.

An original juror was replaced for prejudice after she acknowledged that she had said of Cash's backers that "they should send these kids who are anti-American across to Iraq."