



TODAY, IN 1950

Former State Department official Alger Hiss, accused of being part of a Communist spy ring, was found guilty in New York of lying to a grand jury. (Hiss, who claimed innocence, served less than four years.)

U.S. to launch Ready Kids program

Children prepared for terror, disasters

By **Martha Mendoza**
Associated Press

After more than a year of delays, the Department of Homeland Security says it plans to launch a preparedness program next month aimed at preparing children for terror attacks and natural disasters.

The program, called Ready Kids, is scheduled to roll out with TV ads, school

programs and other events.

"Ready Kids is a tool for parents and teachers to use to be able to speak to their students and children about how to be prepared for any type of disaster," said Homeland Security spokeswoman Joanna Gonzalez.

Gonzalez said the program will include age-appropriate activities and lessons on preparedness.

FEMA, an agency within the Department of Homeland Security, already has a program that prepares children for disasters. FEMA for Kids (www.fema.gov/kids)

includes a pudgy and nervous-looking airplane leaking smoke and a hermit crab mascot named Herman.

Gonzalez said she didn't know how the Ready Kids program, which has a Web site — www.readykids.gov, would differ from FEMA's program.

FEMA spokeswoman Barbara Ellis said FEMA for Kids will include information about Ready Kids "as part of a coordinated promotional launch."

Federal officials originally announced plans to launch Ready Kids in September

2004, in conjunction with National Preparedness Month. Then the department announced launch for National Preparedness Month 2005, this past September.

Gonzalez said she could not explain the delays but said the department is definitely scheduled to launch the program Feb. 2 in Chicago.

Both Martinez and Gonzalez said they had no concerns that the preparedness program might frighten children.

"Personally, I can remember learning to get under a

desk for tornadoes and that that didn't frighten me," Martinez said.

Last year, Homeland Security officials refused to release proposals, documents or budget information about the Ready Kids campaign in response to a Freedom of Information Act request from The Associated Press. They said the program was still being developed.

The program is part of the Department of Homeland Security's \$100 million campaign to prepare American citizens for terrorist attacks and other disasters.