

of the people inside, I really don't think it would make much difference," he said.

Both Ryan and Kissler said Congress, and the federal government, have failed to study cults, educate the citizenry about their dangers or formulate a coordinated law enforcement strategy to prosecute their crimes.

The difficulty of negotiating with Koresh and his followers became evident again Thursday, when FBI special agent Bob Ricks delivered the "bad news" that cult leaders now say they never agreed to surrender after their celebration of Passover next week.

Ricks said Steve Schneider, who is second-in-command of the Branch Davidians, told negotiators Thursday that he "wonders why everyone is putting so much stock" in the holiday and say they did not tell their lawyers they would surrender after a seven-day religious celebration.

"It may be again one of those frustrating things where they have always said 'Well, we've got to get through this and then we're coming out,' " said Ricks. "It looks like they're playing the same con game they've been playing all along. "

The FBI's statement was downplayed by Schneider's attorney, Jack Zimmermann of Houston, who called into question the veracity of the remarks. "I don't know if that's exactly what he (Schneider) said or someone's interpretation," he said. "If Steve really said that, I don't know what he meant. "

Zimmermann repeated his belief that Passover is a significant "high holy day" to the Davidians, adding that adults who have left the compound made similar statements in interviews.

He said he and Koresh's attorney, Dick DeGuerin, also of Houston, remain hopeful their clients will leave the compound after their observance of Passover ends next week.

GRAPHIC: Mug: Patricia Ryan (p. 12)

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