

SECRET

INFORMATION

May 6, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: John Holdridge

SUBJECT: The Fall of Attapeu and Communist Intentions
in South Laos

General Phasouk, the Laotian government's military commander in the southern Panhandle, believes that by seizing Attapeu the Communists intend to gain control of the Se Kong (river) from Ban Bac to the north all the way into Cambodia to the south. The Se Kong would then become an important southern extension of the Ho Chi Minh trail, which could be used even during the rainy season to move supplies to Cambodia and to southern South Vietnam now that access through Sihanoukville has been cut off.

Comment: It is possible that the Communists have some such idea in mind. If so, they still have much to do before they could move large amounts of supplies on the Se Kong. Several government posts still control the river at various points. Even if they were overrun, much of the river runs through flat, open country where it could be subject to interdiction by aircraft or guerrilla teams.

In any event, the seizure of Attapeu serves other purposes. By focusing attention on South Laos, it generates pressures from the southern military commanders for the return of their forces which had been sent to help defend Long Tieng.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

DIA review
completed.

JHH:MFE:alh (5/6/70)

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