

The flow of chemicals from east to west

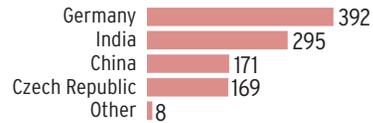
The most potent form of methamphetamine can only be made with either ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, chemicals manufactured legally for the pharmaceuticals industry. Only a handful of overseas factories make the chemicals. Of the 1,300 to 1,800 metric tons produced annually, an estimated 200 tons reaches meth cooks in the United States through a variety of channels.

FOREIGN CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS SUPPLY DRUG COMPANIES

Bulk ephedrine and pseudoephedrine powder, which North American drug companies press into pills, comes from nine large-scale overseas factories and roughly 20 small Chinese refiners. Some ephedrine is extracted from Chinese ephedra grass. But most of the world's supply is synthetic, made with a complex biochemical process that involves fermenting molasses.

U.S. legal imports

Metric tons of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine powder in 2001.

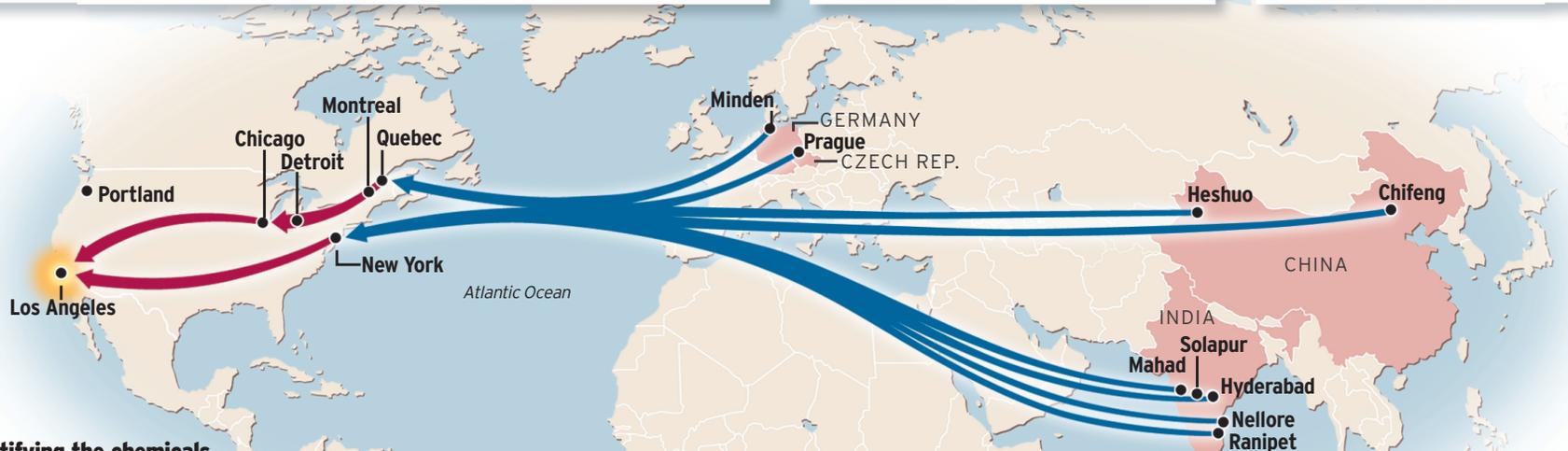


DRUG COMPANIES SUPPLY CARTELS

The cartels historically have relied on unscrupulous individuals within the U.S. and Canadian pharmaceuticals industry to sell them ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. In many cases, middlemen procured crateloads of the cough and cold pills from wholesalers and small manufacturers, then drove the material to California.

DRUG CARTELS PRODUCE METH

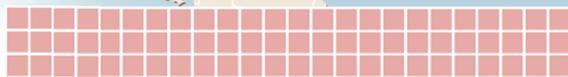
In southern and central California, "superlabs" run by Mexican drug cartels produce an estimated 80 percent of the U.S. meth supply. The cartels, which distribute the drug across the country, require hundreds of tons of the essential ingredients ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.



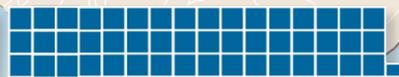
Quantifying the chemicals

All figures are from 2001.

□ = 25 metric tons



Ephedrine/pseudoephedrine produced
1,300-1,800 tons



Imported to USA and Canada
1,158-1,212 tons



Diverted to meth trade
183-238 tons



Methamphetamine made (92% pure)
98-131 tons



Methamphetamine sold (50% pure)
213-285 tons