

of Defense contractor headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. (25) The group reportedly originated during "Project 137", a 1958 conference involving, among others, economist Oskar Morganstern and physicist John Wheeler, who invited younger physicists along to familiarize them with military technical problems. The concern at the time was that most top-level scientific inputs were coming only from the older generation of scientists, most of whom had worked on the Manhattan Project. With the Cold War well underway, it was felt that the country also needed the thinking of the country's best young scientists.

At Los Alamos in 1959, some of these younger scientists gathered to form the group which soon became known as the Jasons or the Jason Division. The group was originally formed as "an enabling mechanism to keep younger physicists in touch with defense problems." (26) It soon became more like a club. The summer technical meetings also became social events, with spouses and children tagging along to vacation while the husbands met in secret conferences.

IDA carefully guards the Jason membership list. Its reports are mostly classified and members' specific positions are unidentified. Jason's chief role seems to be to shoot down unworkable concepts, rather than to try and invent new ones. Funded primarily with Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) money, the Jason's contract does not depend on the outcome of any specific study. Their efforts are wide ranging, including studies concerning anti-ballistic missiles, nuclear blast detection for nuclear disarmament purposes, counterinsurgency, innovative ways to intercept drugs and track the finances of the druglords, anti-submarine warfare, and submarine drag reduction. One of the Jason's more infamous programs occurred in 1966 when many of its members supported then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's plan to place an electronic infiltration barrier across the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Not all Jason members supported the war or the concept of this barrier, which was installed in a piecemeal fashion and later deemed to be unworkable. Even so, the Jasons took a lot of criticism from academics and others outside of the group for this and other Vietnam War activities. The barrier played a prominent role in the Pentagon Papers matter and brought the Jasons a lot of unwanted publicity. (27) Their propensity for anonymity increased after this episode.