

The IDA Systems and Analyses Center (SAC) is one of three Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) operated by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), a nonprofit corporation. Sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), SAC maintains an unusually close, special relationship with the U.S. Government. SAC traces its roots to 1956 when IDA was formed. IDA’s mission is to provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring extraordinary scientific, technical, and analytic expertise.

Our federal agency sponsors

In addition to OSD, SAC’s sponsors include other joint organizations in the Department of Defense (i.e., the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Defense Agencies, and joint programs and activities). SAC conducts research for the military departments in circumstances that ensure no conflict of interest will arise.

With the encouragement and approval of OSD, SAC also conducts appropriate research for other federal departments and agencies.



To guard its objectivity and freedom from conflicts of interest, SAC does no work for commercial firms, has no financial or other stake in the implementation of its findings, and does not compete for federal contracts. SAC research projects undergo a rigorous review process to ensure the quality, independence, and objectivity of the analyses.

Our highly experienced, interdisciplinary staff

SAC has a high-quality, interdisciplinary research staff blending long-standing experience and current knowledge to provide both corporate memory and state-of-the-art expertise. More than 90 percent of the research staff have advanced degrees; over 55 percent have PhDs. About 70 percent of SAC researchers were educated in engineering, physical and life sciences, mathematics and statistics, and computer science; the remainder were educated in economics, political science, business, and other social sciences. When needed to address sponsor problems, SAC augments its regular staff with a deep bench of adjunct staff members and consultants with specialized expertise. IDA encourages its researchers to be active professionally—including publishing in the open literature—to maintain currency and to promote career development.

Our research focus

Initially, SAC analyzed weapons systems, tactical doctrine, and force structure issues. Over succeeding decades, SAC’s research capabilities broadened to meet the evolving needs of its sponsors. Today, SAC blends expertise in technologies and systems with deep knowledge of costs, policies, human capital, intelligence, advanced analytic methods, and sponsor organizations and processes.

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SAC's contributions include the following:

- Evaluating systems and acquisition management
- Providing technical and analytic support for testing
- Supporting contingencies, commands, and operational and force planning
- Advancing cyber and information capabilities
- Analyzing resource allocation and national security economic issues
- Evaluating issues of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defense; and space
- Analyzing resource allocation and national security economic issues
- Evaluating science and technology issues and operational effects
- Assessing readiness, training, education, and personnel issues
- Evaluating institutions, management systems, processes, and support
- Analyzing international issues and regional security matters



Our organizational structure

SAC maintains a flat organizational structure; the directors of each of its eight research divisions, listed below, are responsible to IDA's President for sustaining needed research capabilities and for producing high-quality and timely analyses.

- Cost Analysis and Research Division
- Information Technology and Systems Division
- Intelligence Analyses Division
- Joint Advanced Warfighting Division
- Operational Evaluation Division
- Science and Technology Division
- Strategy, Forces and Resources Division
- System Evaluation Division

While each division has unique lines of research and expertise, sponsor problems often cut across division lines, resulting in the frequent assembly of cross-division teams that bring together interdisciplinary skills and diverse experiences to address national security challenges.

SAC research teams provide the best possible answers to sponsor questions, within the time and resources available. Their common goal is to improve government decision-making.