IBM taking US Air Force into software cloud

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"Our goal is to demonstrate how cloud computing can be a tool to enable our Air Force to manage, monitor and secure the information flowing through our network," said Lieutenant General William Lord, chief information officer for the military branch.

Cloud computing has grown increasingly popular as businesses cut costs and technology maintenance woes by essentially renting software

[applications](link) hosted online instead of buying and installing programs on their own machines.

The Air Force has contracted IBM to develop a private cloud computing "architecture" that improves "all operational, analytical and security capabilities," according to Lord.

IBM said the 10-month-project will "push the technology boundaries" of cloud computing to tailor a system for a military network that includes nine major commands, nearly 100 bases, and 700,000 active personnel worldwide.

A key component of the system will be "stream computing" that couples sensors and monitors to quickly analyze flowing data for "actionable insights" into cyberattacks or network problems, according to IBM.

"This instant access to information would enable [Air Force](link) officials to automatically shift the prevention environment based on rules-based protocols in the event of a [cyberattack](link) or network anomalies," IBM said.

In what might seem a page from science fiction, the system will also feature "autonomic computing" allowing it to "retune itself" without human intervention.

Advantages of cloud computing for the military include allowing resources to be controlled remotely and enabling networks and data to survive even if "underlying hardware" is destroyed, according to the US technology veteran.

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