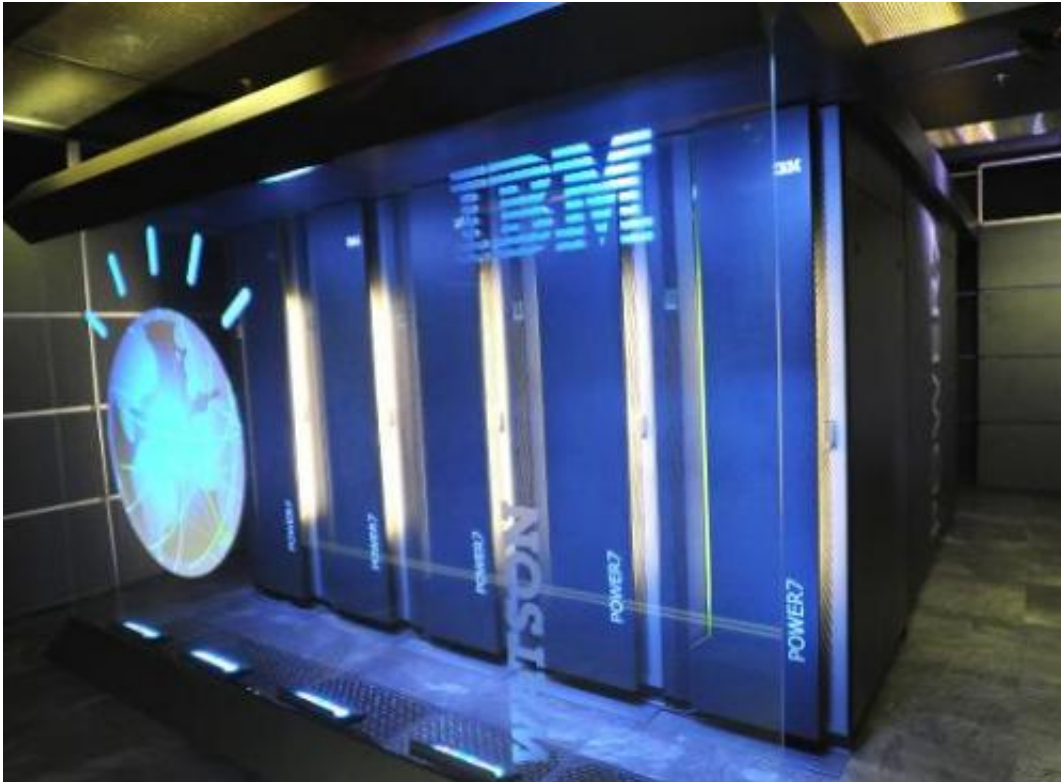# IBM's Watson advises US soldiers on life after service

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File photo courtesy of IBM shows Watson, powered by IBM POWER7, a work-load optimized system that can answer questions posed in natural language over a nearly unlimited range of knowledge

IBM's Watson supercomputer is putting its real-world smarts to work helping US soldiers transition back to civilian lives.

Virtual intelligence created by IBM and proven in a victorious run on trivia television game show "Jeopardy" has been woven into a Watson Engagement Advisor application to counsel members of the military and their families how to smartly manage shifting to life after stints in the service.

USAA, which provides insurance, investment, retirement and other financial services to members of the US armed forces is fielding what was billed by IBM as the first commercial Watson application.

"Putting Watson into the hands of consumers is a critical milestone toward improving how we work and live," IBM Watson Group senior vice president Mike Rhodin said in a release Tuesday.

"We believe this new service can help men and women who served their country gain timely and relevant insights into the steps they need to successfully move to civilian life."

Watson analyzed thousands of documents regarding rules, requirements and rights related to soldiers leaving the military and can answer natural language questions on the topic, according to IBM.

Members of the military using a USAA application for mobile devices can "ask Watson" questions such as how best to write a resume or make the most of GI Bill benefits.

"Through this experience, we expect to learn how intelligent assistants like IBM Watson can help service members who may not know exactly where or how to start the daunting transition process," USAA executive vice president of member experience Shon Manasco said.

With Watson, IBM has set out to let people interact with computers in ways as natural as chatting with a brilliant friend.

Last month, IBM put a chef's hat on Watson supercomputer in an initiative launched with magazine Bon Appetit, seeking to use Big Data for gastronomy.

An app unveiled in test version called "Chef Watson with Bon Appetit" aims at helping cooks "draw on Watson's advanced cognitive capabilities to create entirely new recipes and gastronomic combinations that have previously never been conceived," IBM said.

The military is the latest proving ground for Watson, which has been working on fighting cancer and other medical applications after its "Jeopardy" run.

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