

## Commissioners receive introduction on the F-35 status

October 20, 2009 9:05 PM

[Mona Moore](#), Daily News

FORT WALTON BEACH — Okaloosa County commissioners received a brief introduction and update of the F-35 program Tuesday from a Choctawhatchee High School graduate.

J.R. McDonald, Lockheed Martin's vice president of corporate and business development, moved back to Okaloosa a few months ago to oversee the company's activities from Pensacola to Panama City.

McDonald is the first vice president the company has stationed at its office in Shalimar.

"I'm very excited to be back," said the 1981 Choctaw alumnus.

McDonald said he anticipated the first F-35 to arrive next summer, a few months later than the original March goal. McDonald said after the meeting that the delay was not because of any single aspect of production. Construction at Eglin and testing of the F-35 factored into the new date.

"Schedules are always a fluid partnership to Lockheed Martin and the government. There's a lot that has to happen," he said.

Commissioner John Jannazo invited McDonald to address the board. They flew F-15s together with the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base.

McDonald's presentation included footage of the F-35 flying over local beaches. At the end of the presentation, Jannazo donned an F-35 cap and suggested the board consider taking action to redesign the county seal to include the new aircraft.

"I think it's time for Okaloosa County to move into the 21st century," he said. "It's time to look at the seal and certainly put the F-35 in a prominent place."

The suggestion came as a surprise to McDonald.

"I'm an F-15 pilot. It's sort of nostalgic to see that (seal)," he said after the meeting. "But it shows Okaloosa's looking to the future."