Regent Squire the Seaplanes of the Pacific - from Balbo's Flying Formations to the Drones of the Future

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The sea returns to being the runway of the future. With the recent first flight of the **Regent Squire**, a prototype of a ground effect drone (WIG - *Wing-in-Ground effect*), military technology seems to want to close a circle opened almost a century ago by the legendary feats of Italian aviation.

A red thread between Orbetello and the Pacific

It's impossible to observe the Regent Squire tests in the waters of Rhode Island without memories drifting to the **Transatlantic Flights of Italo Balbo**. If today the United States seeks in the "Seaglider" a solution to transport cargo and sensors between the Pacific islands avoiding radars, in the 1930s Italy set the standard with its "mass cruises".

From Balbo's Flying Formations to the Drones of the Future: The Return of Seaplanes in the Pacific

The historic 1933 transatlantic flight to New York, carried out by 24 **Savoia-Marchetti S.55X** seaplanes, demonstrated to the world that flying over long marine distances was not just an individual challenge, but an organized logistical capability. Those double hulls, which crossed the Atlantic in a perfect "V" formation, are the spiritual grandparents of modern ground effect vehicles that today promise to revolutionize tactical support in contested environments.

What is the Regent Squire?

Defined as the first "unmanned surface and air vehicle" (**USA-V**), the Squire is neither a simple seaplane nor a traditional boat. It uses a **hydrofoil** to lift off the water and then flies at a height approximately equal to its wingspan from the surface, exploiting the "air cushion" (ground effect) to increase efficiency and reduce drag.

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The technical features of the prototype:

- **Speed:** Up to 80 knots (about 150 km/h).
- **Payload:** About 23 kg (50 pounds) in a reconfigurable compartment.
- **Range:** 100 nautical miles.
- **Propulsion:** Eight electric motors.

The Marines' strategy in the Pacific

Why does the Pentagon, and particularly the Marine Corps, observe with such interest a drone that flies "just above the water"? The answer lies in the threat posed by China. In a potential conflict in the Pacific, traditional bases with long concrete runways would be the first targets.

The Squire, just like Balbo's seaplanes, **does not need runways**. It can take off from any calm body of water, transporting supplies, intelligence equipment (ISR), or supporting search and rescue missions (CSAR) in areas where ships are too slow and aircraft too visible.

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Between nostalgia and innovation

While the Russians have historically dominated the sector with the gigantic *Ekranoplans* of the Soviet era (like the famous "Caspian Sea Monster"), the Regent project focuses on modularity and the absence of a pilot.

However, the charm remains the same as that July 1933, when Italian wings darkened the sky of New York. If then the seaplane represented the highest expression of prestige and transoceanic

power projection, today its robotic heir represents the new frontier of **distributed logistics**.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth recently visited Regent's headquarters, confirming that American defense is on the hunt for technologies capable of "filling the gaps" in unconventional ways. If the tests scheduled for the summer of 2026 are successful, the future of maritime warfare might once again speak the language of those who know how to ride the waves and the wind simultaneously.