To the Editor:

I spent my spring break amongst the pelicans of the Virgin Islands. In the evenings, I watched them flying high, looking for fish, spotting fish, lamplight, diving, with necks stretched and wings tucked into tight Ws; forty pelicans hitting the water in rapid succession like heavy raindrops on a lake. The lucky ones would tilt their heads back and shake the fish down their throats.

After I left the pelicans of the Virgin Islands, I heard about Reagan’s push for an antiballistic system. I was struck by the contrast between the art in purpose of pelican life and the self-defeating purpose of an antiballistic system.

Allow me to clarify the latter contention. Let us imagine that students at MIT perfect an antiballistic system, guaranteed to knock out any missile from Russia or you get your money back. If you were Russian, what would you do? This is what I would do: smuggle atomic weapons into American cities and store the bombs in covertly owned warehouses for use when needed.

Is this plan feasible? Smuggling? No problem. Marijuana is barged in by the ton, undetected.

Storage? No problem. There are thousands of warehouses, and thousands of boxes that say “This End Up,” that remain untouched for years. Coordinated detonation? No problem. Ma Bell will supply the telephone lines, and Russian electrical engineers the necessary safeguards.

No antiballistic systems could knock out the smuggled bomb. There is no doubt we could spend billions of dollars and develop an antiballistic system. However, there may be a box that says “This End Up” — a block from your job, or a block from your home — a box that could vaporize a large section of your city. The more we push for an antiballistic system, the more likely a bomb will be planted in our backyard.

I miss the pelicans of the Virgin Islands. They have a genuine reason for being.

Douglas Sweetser ’84