Fossum shines as Red Sox beat Rangers again, 7-1 — C1

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# The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2003

PASSING GRAYED
TODAY: *Sun and clouds, still cool, breezy, 54-59*
TOMORROW: *Clouds persist; chance of a drizzle, 50-55*
HIGH TIDE: *11:11 a.m., 11:27 p.m.*
FULL REPORT: PAGE C16

## Crash in tunnel snarls I-93

### Driver of truck called unlicensed

By Raphael Lewis and John Ellement
GLOBE STAFF

Northbound expressway traffic crawled along for most of yesterday after an unlicensed driver, hauling a grossly overweight tractor-trailer at least 25 miles per hour above the posted limit, barreled into the new Artery tunnel, spun out of control, and jackknifed, authorities said. It was the second major crash in the tunnel since it opened less than two months ago.

Damage from the 3:19 a.m. accident, in which the truck smashed into one side of the tunnel and careened across the roadway to smash head-on into the opposite wall, forced officials to close the tunnel for 2½ hours. Turnpike Authority officials said the crushed wall tiles and diesel fuel cleanup will cost about $500,000. Added to that were countless headaches for motorists driving north on Interstate 93 who were caught in the morning jam, which had traffic backed up into Braintree.

Massachusetts Turnpike Authority chairman Matthew Amor-

TUNNEL, Page B4

GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/JANET KNOTT

**Northbound I-93 motorists suffered long backups.**

## GRIEF AT MASS IRAQI GRAVE

GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/JONATHAN WIGGS

**A grieving Haleem Hassan carried the remains of his cousin yesterday from the site of the mass grave in Mahaweel, Iraq.**

## Search could turn up thousands more

By Patrick Healy
GLOBE STAFF

MAHAWEEL, Iraq — Fathers, sons, brothers, and widows say they have unearthed more than 3,000 bodies so far this month at a single mass grave here, potentially the largest site in at least 10 cities and towns where Saddam Hussein's security forces dispatched enemies of the regime.

US officials and human rights groups estimated yesterday that the remains of tens of thousands killed by Hussein's men are expected to be found piled together — most clothed, some with identification cards — in mass graves around the country.

**▶ The United States will double its force patrolling Baghdad in an effort to curb lawlessness. A22.**

"There may be up to 10,000 bodies in just this grave — it's stunning," said Lieutenant Colonel Rick Long of the US Marines, whose soldiers arrived yesterday to document the scene at the Mahaweel site, 55 miles south of Baghdad. "My mind cannot comprehend how anyone could do such a thing."

Most of the graves are in southern Iraq, home to Shi'ite Muslims, who were brutally repressed under Hussein, a Sunni Muslim, and often detained or killed because their political sympathies were suspect. A 1991 Shi'ite uprising against Hussein, after Iraq's defeat in the first Gulf War, led to countless slaughter that some Iraqis have termed a genocide.

"Hussein's men came in meanness," said Mujal Rasoul, an elderly man poking his cane into piles of bones, searching for the remains of a brother who disappeared in 1991. "They simply hated my brother. No other reason. Now he is here. But I have no way to find him."

Human rights groups that compiled reports across the country have estimated that as many as 200,000 Iraqis disappeared dur-

IRAQ, Page A22

## Friends say Lopez will quit bench

### Reportedly fears harsh scrutiny in SJC review

By Ralph Ranalli and Joanna Weiss
GLOBE STAFF

**MARIA I. LOPEZ**
**Denied wrongdoing**

Maria I. Lopez, the embattled Superior Court judge who faces a six-month suspension for misconduct on the bench, plans to quit her judgeship tomorrow, according to two friends who have been informed of her intentions.

Lopez is worried she will not get a fair hearing in the ongoing review of her conduct and could have trouble functioning as a judge under the public scrutiny that would follow her return to judicial duties, one of the friends said.

Her exit would come two weeks after the close of her misconduct hearing, which arose from complaints about her behavior during the sentencing in a 2000 sexual assault case.

Retired Judge E. George Daher, who presided over her hearing, issued a 234-page ruling that said Lopez had lied under oath and showed bias against state prosecutors — and that her behavior raises "a fundamental question about the judge's fitness to serve."

Daher recommended that Lopez be suspended without pay and apologize to the public. The Commission on Judicial Misconduct must vote on whether to accept that recommendation, and the final decision rests with the Supreme Judicial Court. Lopez also faces a public hearing on the issue on June 10.

Lopez, who has consistently denied wrongdoing, is scheduled

LOPEZ, Page A10

## Fleet, Hancock eyed merger, officials say

By Steve Bailey and Steven Syre
GLOBE STAFF

FleetBoston Financial Corp., the region's largest bank, and John Hancock Financial Services Inc., the region's largest life insurance company, engaged in two months of merger discussions in an effort to construct a hometown financial services giant for Boston, according to several executives involved with the negotiations. But the talks ended three weeks ago over concerns that the proposed combination could make one or both companies the target of a hostile takeover before they could complete any deal.

The negotiations, conducted through March and April, involved at least three face-to-face meetings between Fleet's chief executive, Chad Gifford, and Hancock's chief executive, David D'Alessandro. There were also a number of meetings over two months between the companies' merger-and-acquisition teams, both at Fleet's downtown headquarters and the Hancock tower, according to the executives involved in the deal.

Executives of both companies have long toyed with the idea of combining to form a financial services giant that would offer banking, insurance, and the sale of stocks and bonds. Among many Wall Street investors, Fleet is seen as a takeover target unless it can

MERGER TALKS, Page A11

## Inside Today

**Bombing aftermath**
Saudi Arabia's foreign minister acknowledges that there were security gaps before Monday's suicide attacks, but he denies that the United States had requested increased protection at foreign residential compounds. **World, A12.**

**Interest rates plunge**
The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury notes hits a 45-year low as investors continue their rush to buy bonds. **Business, E1.**

**Features**


| | |
|---|---|
| Comics | C14-15 |
| Crossword | C14 |
| Deaths | B8-10 |
| Editorials | A14 |
| Horoscope | C14 |
| Lottery | B2 |
| Movies | D6-7 |
| TV/Radio | C12-13 |




**Classified**


| | |
|---|---|
| Classified | H |
| Autos | H |
| Education | H |
| Help Wanted | H |
| Professional | H |
| Real Estate | H |
| Apartments | H |
| Comm'l/Ind'l | H |
| Market Basket | H |
| Yachts/Boats | C5 |


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## New guidelines see many more at risk on blood pressure

By Stephen Smith
GLOBE STAFF

Millions of Americans with blood pressure levels previously regarded as safe face the risk of heart attack, stroke, or kidney failure unless they adopt healthier lifestyles, according to sweeping new guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of hypertension released yesterday by federal health authorities.

Recommendations by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute say that blood pressure readings once considered acceptable, as low as 120 over 80, should sound an alarm to both doctors and patients, not so much because of imminent threat, but because they suggest that patients may be on the path to developing life-threatening cardiovascular conditions.

Decades of research have persuaded scientists that many Americans are destined to record ever-higher blood pressure rates as they age, unless they become more active, eat less fatty food, and reduce salt intake.

The recommendations are the first shift in hypertension treatment recommendations in six years and are among the most dramatic and potentially most controversial ever issued by a committee of specialists that advises the federal agency. As many as 46 million Americans are included in the new danger-zone category.

"It's the most significant change in at least the last 15 years in the strategy to manage and prevent high blood pressure," said Dr. Aram V. Chobanian, chairman of the committee that drafted the guidelines and

HYPERTENSION, Page A7

AP PHOTO

**GRIM DISCOVERY IN TEXAS —** The deaths of 18 migrants trapped inside a trailer are called the greatest loss of life in recent years in the smuggling of workers across the Mexican border. **A2.**

## Slain NU student's roommate declares killers sought drugs

By Douglas Belkin
GLOBE STAFF

The three armed men who bound four Northeastern University students and murdered a fifth Monday night kept asking the same question over and over before they fired three bullets into James Cassidy's legs: "Where's the weed?" according to one of Cassidy's roommates who was present during the attack.

The student said he was lying face down in another bedroom with his hands and feet bound when he heard the three evenly spaced gunshots. He said he kept thinking, "I'm going to die. My girlfriend is going to die. I'm not even going to see the person who kills me."

Cassidy had dealt drugs — mostly marijuana — out of his rear bedroom in the apartment ever since the roommate moved in over the winter, he said. When the Worcester native had a stash, dozens of students would traipse through the apartment, disappear into the bedroom with Cassidy, and leave a few minutes later.

The roommate, who asked not to be named because the gunmen are still at large, said Cassidy never dealt drugs in the common area, and neither he nor the other two roommates were involved.

Cassidy had no record of drug dealing, according to state records. Boston police declined to comment yesterday on whether they had information on Cassidy dealing drugs, whether they had complaints about drug dealing in his apartment, or if they had made any progress in the investigation of the city's

SLAYING, Page A6

RED BLUE YELLOW BLACK

## Cross-town courtship

| | FleetBoston Financial Corp. | John Hancock Financial Services |
|---|---|---|
| Year founded | 1791 | 1862 |
| Chief executive | Chad Gifford, 60 | David D'Alessandro, 52 |
| Employees* | 49,567 | 7,962 |
| Revenue* | $8.7b | $8.5b |
| Net income* | $1.2b | $499.5m |
| Market value** | $30.3b | $8.0b |
| Stock price** | $28.86 | $27.85 |

* figures from year-end 2002
** as of yesterday
SOURCES: Bloomberg News, Hoover's Inc.

# Fleet, Hancock eyed a merger

► **MERGER TALKS**
*Continued from Page A1*

boost its share price before a rising stock market ignites another round of bank acquisitions. Hancock is also widely viewed as a takeover candidate.

A Fleet spokesman, James Mahoney, would not comment on any negotiations with Hancock. But he added, "We have made it clear that acquisitions are a key part of our future, and we see asset management as a prime growth area."

A Hancock spokesman declined to comment.

Under the deal being discussed, the much larger Fleet would have acquired Hancock and Gifford would have run the combined companies. But the talks ended before any serious negotiation over price, according to the executives involved in the talks.

While both Gifford and D'Alessandro liked the idea of building a Boston-based financial giant, both felt there were too many problems in the end, according to executives at both companies.

Fleet was concerned that Wall Street would be so negative on its acquisition of an insurer that in the many months it would take to receive shareholder, regulatory, and other approvals needed to close the deal, Fleet's stock price would fall and Fleet itself would become a takeover candidate. A Fleet-Hancock deal could also disappoint Fleet shareholders who were hoping to receive a premium if Fleet itself were bought by another bank.

Hancock, too, worried that by establishing a buyout price it could also put itself in play by telling other potential bidders its selling price.

Fleet stock, which had sunk to a six-year low in 2002, has improved recently and increased in value by 19 percent so far this year. John Hancock shares, like those of many other large insurance companies, are priced well below their highs of 2001 and early last year. Hancock stock has lost about a third of its peak value, reached in January 2002.

Fleet closed yesterday at $28.86, up 18 cents. Hancock closed at $27.85, down 20 cents.

Citigroup Inc., the huge New York financial services company, was a model for a Fleet-Hancock deal, but both sides worried that this kind of combination had yet to prove itself to Wall Street investors, said one top executive involved in the talks.

Citigroup became the world's second-largest financial service company as a result of a long string of mergers over a decade. Chief executive Sanford Weill built a financial services empire by purchasing brand-name businesses in insurance, stock brokerage, and investment banking, eventually merging the company with banking giant Citicorp in 1998.

On Wall Street, it is believed that a long line of potential acquirers is interested in Fleet, including Bank One Corp., Citigroup, and Wells Fargo & Co. Potential Hancock acquirers include Metlife Inc., Prudential Financial Inc., Manulife Financial Corp., and Sun Life Financial.

Fleet and Hancock could yet renew their talks. Fleet and BankBoston had three rounds of talks beginning in 1995 before their merger was completed four years later.

At $30 billion, Fleet's stock market value is nearly four times as large as Hancock's. Insurance represents one of the few types of financial services the New England banking leader does not operate today, though Fleet quit the investment banking business in recent years by closing its Robertson Stephens unit.

Fleet grew from an obscure Rhode Island bank into a giant franchise extending from Maine to Pennsylvania through a series of mergers. The company, which employs about 50,000 people, struck its biggest deal of all when Fleet Financial Group merged with BankBoston Corp. in 1999.

Fleet has run into trouble over the past three years, in part as a result of its broad diversification. Big losses at Robertson Stephens, an investment bank that had concentrated on high-tech stock offerings, forced Fleet to seek a buyer and eventually shut the business after it failed to raise interest. Financial turmoil in South America, where BankBoston had long conducted extensive business, also took a heavy toll on Fleet.

Hancock, founded in 1862, converted from mutual ownership and went public with an initial stock offering in 2000. The company, which had about 7,900 employees at the end of last year, makes most of its money selling insurance products like life coverage and annuities, and offering investment management services.

Hancock has had its own problems over the past two years, taking substantial losses on a big corporate bond portfolio that included millions in debt issued by troubled telecommunications, energy, and airline businesses.

Hancock has taken a number of steps that would be consistent with plans to sell the company. The insurer sold its tower headquarters and two other nearby buildings to Beacon Capital Partners for $918 million two months ago. The company also executed plans to drive down operating expenses, such as outsourcing hundreds of information technology jobs earlier this year.

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