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HOUSTON EXPLORATION CO  
Form 8-K  
September 15, 2003

UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT  
PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(D) OF THE  
SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Date of Report (date of earliest event reported): September 15, 2003

THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY  
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

DELAWARE  
(State or other jurisdiction  
of incorporation)

001-11899  
(Commission File Number)

22-267  
(I.R.S. E  
Identifica

1100 LOUISIANA, SUITE 2000  
HOUSTON, TEXAS  
(Address of principal executive  
offices)

77002-  
(Zip C

Registrant's telephone number, including area code: (713) 830-6800

NOT APPLICABLE  
(Former name or former address, if changed since last report)

ITEM 5 AND ITEM 9. OTHER EVENTS AND REGULATION FD DISCLOSURE.

On September 15, 2003, The Houston Exploration Company issued a press release announcing it had signed a purchase and sale agreement with Transworld Exploration and Production, Inc. to acquire all of Transworld's asset base in the shallow-water Gulf of Mexico for a cash purchase price of \$155 million, subject to customary closing adjustments. The transaction is expected to close on October 15, 2003. Please see Exhibit 99.1 for a copy of the press release, which is incorporated herein by reference.

ITEM 7. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND EXHIBITS

99.1 Press release announcing the purchase and sale agreement with Transworld Exploration and Production, Inc.

SIGNATURE

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned hereunto duly authorized.

THE HOUSTON EXPLORATION COMPANY

By: /s/ James F. Westmoreland

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James F. Westmoreland  
Vice President and Chief Accounting Officer

Dated: September 15, 2003