Roemer cites Louisiana education needs

By The Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA — Former Gov. Buddy Roemer, now a business consultant in Baton Rouge, says more needs to be done to try to improve education in Louisiana and the rest of the United States.

"The truth is we're not doing adequately," Roemer told an Alexandria civic club Tuesday. "We have a problem."

He pointed to studies which show the United States fifth in the world in competitiveness and toward the bottom out of 27 countries in knowledge of geography, mathematics, language and science.

Brig. Gen. Dave Sawyer, commander of England Air Force Base here since April 1990, also spoke to the club.

He said he is being transferred next weekend to Howard Air Base, Panama, and Col. Dick Lemon, now vice commander, will take over at England, which will be closed in December.

"It was not my intention to come to England Air Force Base and close the place down," Sawyer said.

However, he said he talked to other commanders whose bases are closing around the country, and "There is no place where it is going as well as here."

Meanwhile, U.S. Sen. John Breaux, D-La., said an environmental study shows no problems with the transfer of the Army's Joint Readiness Training Center to Fort Polk from Fort Chaffee, Ark.

Breaux made the announcement outside England AFB because the Department of Defense had prohibited news representatives from accompanying the senator on a tour of the base and blocked his press conference on the base on the grounds that it might be a political event.

And he said his tour of England AFB indicated it would be a right place for a staging area for the training center at Fort Polk.

"The facilities that I've seen today clearly indicate that the staging facility handling 4,000 troops at a time on a regular basis can be handled at this facility quickly and at the least amount of cost to the taxpayer," he said.

The JRTC needs a staging area to prepare for the intensive training at Fort Polk.