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**Lord Ashcroft**

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## **Lord Ashcroft, Whose Reward Led to the Return of the Country's Stolen Bravery Medals, Visits New Zealand**

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND--(Marketwire - April 12, 2008) - Lord Ashcroft, the man whose NZ\$200,000 reward led to the successful return of many of the country's priceless medals for bravery, is visiting New Zealand early next week to visit the Waiouru Army Museum, scene of the theft of the medals, and to meet the people in Auckland and Wellington who orchestrated their recovery.

A total of 96 medals were stolen from the Museum in December. These included no fewer than nine Victoria Crosses, the Commonwealth's most prestigious military medal. Amongst the VC's stolen was the incomparable VC and Bar awarded to the late Charles Upham, one of only three VC and Bars ever issued, and the only VC and Bar ever awarded to a fighting soldier.

Lord Ashcroft is the world's leading collector of Victoria Crosses, having been responsible for building a collection containing more than 10% of all VC's ever conferred. He regards Charles Upham's VC and Bar as of supreme importance. He said, "I wanted to ensure that these medals were returned safely. It was unthinkable that they might be destroyed or otherwise lost forever. I am proud to have been able to help."

Lieutenant General Jerry Mateparae, Chief of the New Zealand Defence Force wrote to thank Lord Ashcroft, "Any theft is distressing, but this was a crime of national significance. It represented a theft of our heritage. It was a callous and belligerent attack against the courage, commitment and honour of the men and women past, present and future who have served our country."

Whilst in New Zealand, Lord Ashcroft will also be meeting Corporal Willie Apiata VC, of New Zealand's Special Air Service, the only living New Zealand recipient of the Victoria Cross. Corporal Apiata received the VC for bravery under fire whilst fighting in Afghanistan in 2004.

For more information about the Victoria Cross, please visit [www.victoriacrossheroes.com](http://www.victoriacrossheroes.com).