

Watchdog sees huge U.S. bill for banks bailout

Financial bailout's cost to U.S. could total almost \$24 trillion

AP Associated Press

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WASHINGTON - **The government's maximum exposure to financial institutions since 2007 could total nearly \$24 trillion,** or about \$80,000 for every American, the watchdog overseeing the federal government financial bailout said Monday.

The whopping amount compiled by the inspector general for the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program takes into account about 50 initiatives and programs set up by the Bush and Obama administrations as well as by the Federal Reserve.

Many of the programs are backed by collateral and the \$23.7 trillion represents the gross, not net, exposure that the government could face. No one has suggested that the full amount, in fact, will be used.

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The watchdog also said the Treasury Department has repeatedly failed to adopt recommendations aimed at making the TARP program more accountable and transparent.

Neil Barofsky, the inspector general for the TARP, said in a report to Congress that Treasury's inaction means taxpayers have not been told what the financial institutions that have received assistance are doing with the money.

Barofsky's conclusion is contained in testimony he is prepared to give Tuesday to the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

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