

Kudrytskyi's arrest: an attempt to intimidate representatives of the state apparatus in Ukraine

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On 30 October, Volodymyr Kudrytskyi, former head of Ukrenergo (the national electricity grid operator), was released from custody after posting bail. Two days earlier, he had been detained by officers of Ukraine's State Bureau of Investigation (DBR), and the following day, the Pechersk District Court in Kyiv ordered his pre-trial detention, setting bail at 13.7 million hryvnias. Kudrytskyi is accused of fraud and embezzlement during tenders for the construction of substation fences in 2018, when he served as Ukrenergo's deputy director for investment. Members of parliament from both opposition parties – European Solidarity and Holos – as well as from the ruling Servant of the People party, attended the hearing to show support for him. After being released, Kudrytskyi described the case as a 'poorly planned and clumsily executed act of political revenge'.

Kudrytskyi worked at Ukrenergo from 2016, serving as the company's CEO between 2020 and 2024. He successfully oversaw the integration of Ukraine's power grid with the EU network, a process that coincided with the outbreak of the war. He was also responsible for constructing protective fortifications for transmission infrastructure. Among Western donors, Kudrytskyi was regarded as a highly competent and honest professional, which helped Ukrenergo secure €1.5 billion in grants and loans. This reputation, coupled with his independence, reportedly brought him into conflict with the then energy minister Herman Halushchenko, leading to his controversial dismissal in September 2024.

The arrest sparked outrage in Ukraine comparable to the public reaction that followed the Presidential Office's attempt in July to undermine the independence of the country's anti-corruption institutions (see '[Ukraine: the independence of anti-corruption bodies is being dismantled amid scandals involving top politicians](#)'). Kudrytskyi's detention forms part of a broader pattern of actions by law enforcement bodies targeting independent institutions and individuals critical of President Volodymyr Zelensky's camp and the president himself. The demonstrative nature of the arrest, based on questionable charges, is intended to enforce the complete loyalty of the administrative apparatus to those in power.

Commentary

- **Kudrytskyi's arrest was most likely authorised by President Zelensky's inner circle.** This is suggested by the involvement of the DBR, which is controlled by the Presidential Office, as well as by the media campaign against the former Ukrenergo head, launched by outlets linked to the authorities shortly before his detention. It remains unclear what

directly triggered the arrest. Although Kudrytskyi had recently become more publicly active, giving several interviews in which he criticised, among other things, the government's insufficient preparedness for Russian attacks on energy infrastructure, such statements can hardly be regarded as a serious threat to those in power. It is possible that the aim was to make him a scapegoat for the problems with electricity supply. However, such a strategy may prove difficult to sustain, as he has not served as Ukrenergo's CEO for over a year. Moreover, largely owing to his earlier efforts, the operator appears considerably better prepared for the heating season than the regional electricity distribution companies – mostly privately owned – which have been the main targets of Russian strikes (see [‘On the eve of a heating season: Russia targets weak links in Ukraine’s energy system’](#)).

- **The criminal charges brought against Kudrytskyi appear to lack merit.** As head of Ukrenergo, he signed a contract with a company that had won a public tender but failed to fulfil its obligations despite receiving an advance payment. However, the operator did not incur any losses, as the contract was covered by a guarantee from ConcordBank, which ultimately proved to be the only party that suffered damages.
- **The ostentatious operation conducted by the DBR was intended to intimidate representatives of the state apparatus.** The message is clear: any employee of a state-owned company can be arrested, and their actual achievements or professional reputation are irrelevant if they are considered too independent or insufficiently compliant with the ruling camp's expectations. Similar tactics have previously been employed against members of the business community (for example in the so-called Mazepa case – see [‘Ukraine: the law enforcement bodies take controversial actions targeting business’](#)). Their aim was to intimidate officials – above all members of the management and supervisory boards of state-owned enterprises – and to compel their complete loyalty to the Presidential Office.
- **The Kudrytskyi case will make it more difficult to recruit professional managers to work in state-owned companies and in public administration.** The authorities are facing an increasingly severe staffing crisis – a good example of which is the appointment of Yuliia Svyrydenko's new government in July 2025 (see [‘Ukraine: new government led by Yuliia Svyrydenko’](#)), in which virtually all ministers had previously served as deputy ministers or heads of other ministries.