Rule 5(a) provides that a police officer who has made an arrest shall take the arrested person before a magistrate without unnecessary delay. Rule 5(b) provides that the magistrate shall inform the defendant of the complaint against him, of his right to retain counsel, of his right to a preliminary hearing, that he is not required to make a statement, and that any statement made by him may be used against him. Rule 5 imposes no sanction on the police for a violation of the rule.

The McNabb decision interpreted the statutory antecedents of Rule 5(a). It merely decided that any confession obtained during a period of illegal detention cannot be received in evidence. McNabb v. United States, 318 U.S. 332 (1943).

The McNabb rule itself is not a constitutional doctrine. It is a rule of evidence established by the Supreme Court in the exercise of its supervisory authority over the administration of criminal justice in the federal courts. The facts in the McNabb case itself, and in other cases involving application of the McNabb rule, raise constitutional questions as well because protracted secret questioning by the policy may, at least under some circumstances, also constitute a violation of due process. When the McNabb doctrine is applied, however, the constitutional questions need not be reached, and they were not reached by the Supreme Court in the McNabb case.

The Mallory case simply interprets when the McNabb rule is violated. Mallory was arrested around 2:30 P.M. The police then had insufficient evidence to take him before the Commissioner. He made a series of confessions late that night and was arraigned at 10:00 o'clock the next morning. The Court held the confessions were improperly admitted at trial because Rule 5(a) had been violated. Mallory v. United States, 354 U.S. 449 (1957).

The Killough case involved a situation in which there had been a Mallory violation in that the police had obtained a confession during a period of illegal detention. The defendant was then arraigned and the police later obtained a reaffirmation of the earlier confession. At the trial the prosecutor used only the reaffirmation. The Killough case simply holds that the reaffirmation has no validity unless the accused has received