Mendilow presents views on Middle East

By Jeff Frankel

A look into the ever-evolving status of the Middle East focused on the efforts of the extremist group Hamas to gain advantage over both the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israelis.

In an event sponsored by the College of Continuing Studies on Wednesday, Nov. 9, Dr. Jonathan Mendilow of the Political Science Department gave input on the situation in the Middle East. Formerly, Mendilow was a press officer with the Israeli army.

"Both sides are really in a Catch-22," said Mendilow. "Both sides know that they rely on the other. [Prime Minister Ariel] Sharon knows his destiny. Hamas knows their destiny lies in Sharon’s hands."

Mendilow has been lecturing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict many times and one was long overdue, said Karen Crowell, associate dean of the College of Continuing Studies.

"Because of that event and its subsequent impact on the region, as well as the recent Israeli pull-out of the Gaza Strip, I felt we were due for another update," she said.

A Hamas is on the warpath to gain total control of Israel by terrorism, Mendilow said.

"Hamas is on Jihad," said Mendilow. The young factions within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) are all united with the notion that war against Israel should continue and that would get Israel to do what [they] want," he said.

Mendilow says the extremists groups do not hear anti-terrorist messages because they don’t understand the language.

"Every time there is a terrorist attack, [Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of the PLO] is diligently speaking in English and denouncing it," he said. "What he may hope is that the Israelis may listen, and the Arabs will not know what he is talking about."

He said it would be unwise for Israel to totally withdraw from the Gaza Strip because it would show the groups that terror wins.

"It means also that terrorist groups interpret the Israeli withdrawal as their success," he said.

Mendilow commented on the riots in France and Belgium and said that while this country has the elements to start one, it will not happen here.

"We have a parallel situation developing but the numbers are different," he said. "Moreover, America has managed to integrate these populations on an individual basis."

Crowell said his Middle East lecture was a "thoughtful and thought-provoking balanced presentation."

"I am glad he also extended the hope that because of the environment of the Middle East, both sides may become part of the solution," said Mendilow.

Although starting the show 40 minutes late may not have been the best way to kick off the night, most students agreed that the hosts took the crowd’s minds off the late start.

"The hosts were brilliant," said sophomore Daryl Hawkins. "Any other hosts would have made it a dead show, but they helped keep the night alive by throwing in a variety of jokes when there seemed to be breaks in the action."

After Francis and Gray made their entertaining introductions and announced the panel of five judges, the crowd erupted with an abundance of enthusiasm the moment the Greyhound Theater was really crowded and some people had to stand and didn’t even get seats.

At the end of the night, the first place trophy went to LTO and Phi Beta Sigma. Although The College New Jersey (TCNJ) junior Danielle DiPaolo felt there should be more of a variety of teams to compete next year, she was pleased with her first Rider step show.

"I thought each routine was unique and just really enjoyed it," said DiPaolo. "I was definitely impressed with all of the teams."