

# Rebuilding Afghanistan

THIS ALUM'S JOB? PUTTING ENGINEERS TO WORK ALL OVER THE WORLD

Armed guards lining the tarmac and the shell of a plane greeted Nick Masucci (GSNB'75) on a trip to Afghanistan last year. "It took me about five seconds to realize that I was the only one walking out of the airport in Kabul without an automatic weapon," he says.

As president of the Louis Berger Group in East Orange—the largest American engineering consulting firm in the international market, with more than \$300 million in annual revenues and 4,000 employees worldwide—Masucci visited Afghanistan to make sure his employees were well protected in the war-torn environment and meet with their client: the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In the 1950s, the firm designed parts of the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the section of U.S. Interstate 80 that runs through New Jersey. Since that time, it has designed and built highways, pipelines, and dams on five continents. The firm's largest project in Afghanistan is the reconstruction of the ring-like, 650-mile-long Kabul-Kandahar-Herat highway. "Kandahar is where Alexander camped before invading India and the highway is part of the original Silk Road," says Masucci, a graduate of Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. "But it's gone through 30 years of war; much of its beauty was destroyed and everything has been disrupted."

The firm hired subcontractors to first remove landmines and flew in heavy machinery to rebuild the highway and its bridges. More than 2,000 security guards protect their engineers and construction crews. "'We recently opened a portion of the highway,'" says Masucci. "It used to take two days for a farmer to bring his produce from Kandahar to the capital in Kabul. It now takes seven hours. That's just one example of the enormous impact the highway has on the economy."

The firm is also working in Iraq and has recently signed a contract that may keep it there for the next five years. With safety an obvious concern, Masucci is planning a trip to make sure Berger's 50 employees already there are well protected. Says Masucci, "My wife isn't at all happy about it, but you can't send someone to a dangerous place and not be willing to go yourself."



Besides Masucci, the Berger Group's senior management team includes 12 graduates of the Bloustein School.