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Todenhöfer said, he visited Afghanistan three times, entering on foot from Pakistan via the Hindu Kush frontier area.

He witnessed Mr. Mubarak's downfall in February 2011 while mingling with protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo, narrowly escaped injury from a bombing in Brega, Libya, during the anti-Qaddafi uprising a few months later, and was detained twice while traveling through trouble spots in Syria on a tourist visa.

"I went to Homs and Hama without asking anyone," he said, adding, "That's my way of traveling." After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, he said, he went to Afghanistan many times and founded a war orphanage there. He also spent time with anti-American fighters in Iraq.

Mr. Todenhöfer wrote a book about the Iraq conflict that chronicled the life of an 18-year-old Marine, Lance Cpl. Andrew J. Aviles, of Tampa, Fla., who was killed by an artillery round on April 7, 2003, and a 12-year-old Iraqi girl named Marwa who lost a leg from a bombing on the same day. As part of his research for the book, "Andy und Marwa," he spent a week with Corporal Aviles's parents. The Marine's mother, Norma, said Mr. Todenhöfer stays in regular touch.

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