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Last Update: Monday,
May 1, 2006. 6:05pm
(AEST)

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East Timor soldiers carry automatic rifles patrol the streets in Dili. (Reuters)

Residents returning to Dili, says Foreign Minister

By Foreign Affairs editor Peter Cave

Troops have been withdrawn from key positions in and around the East Timorese capital, Dili, where tight security has been in place to prevent a repeat of the weekend's bloody riots.

East Timor's Government says the rioting has largely been the work of thugs and hooligans, who have hijacked a peaceful demonstration by a group of sacked soldiers.

Thousands of people sought shelter in a

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convent and other places, after two people were killed in the violence.

The nation's Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta says those who fled Dili on the weekend are returning.

"Hundreds are flocking back to their homes gradually," he said.

"There are still substantial numbers, as of yesterday, in one of the Catholic schools, but as of today, I believe most of the places will be vacated.

"From the embassies, where they took shelter, many are also leaving, going back to their homes since yesterday."

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